THE Nation.

LOVING McCAIN

A SMITTEN PRESS CORPS SOFT-PEDALS HIS HARDLINE POLITICS

Eric Alterman with George Zornick

THE OUTRAGEOUS GAS PRICE SURGE
Michael T. Klare

GUATEMALAN MURDER MYSTERY
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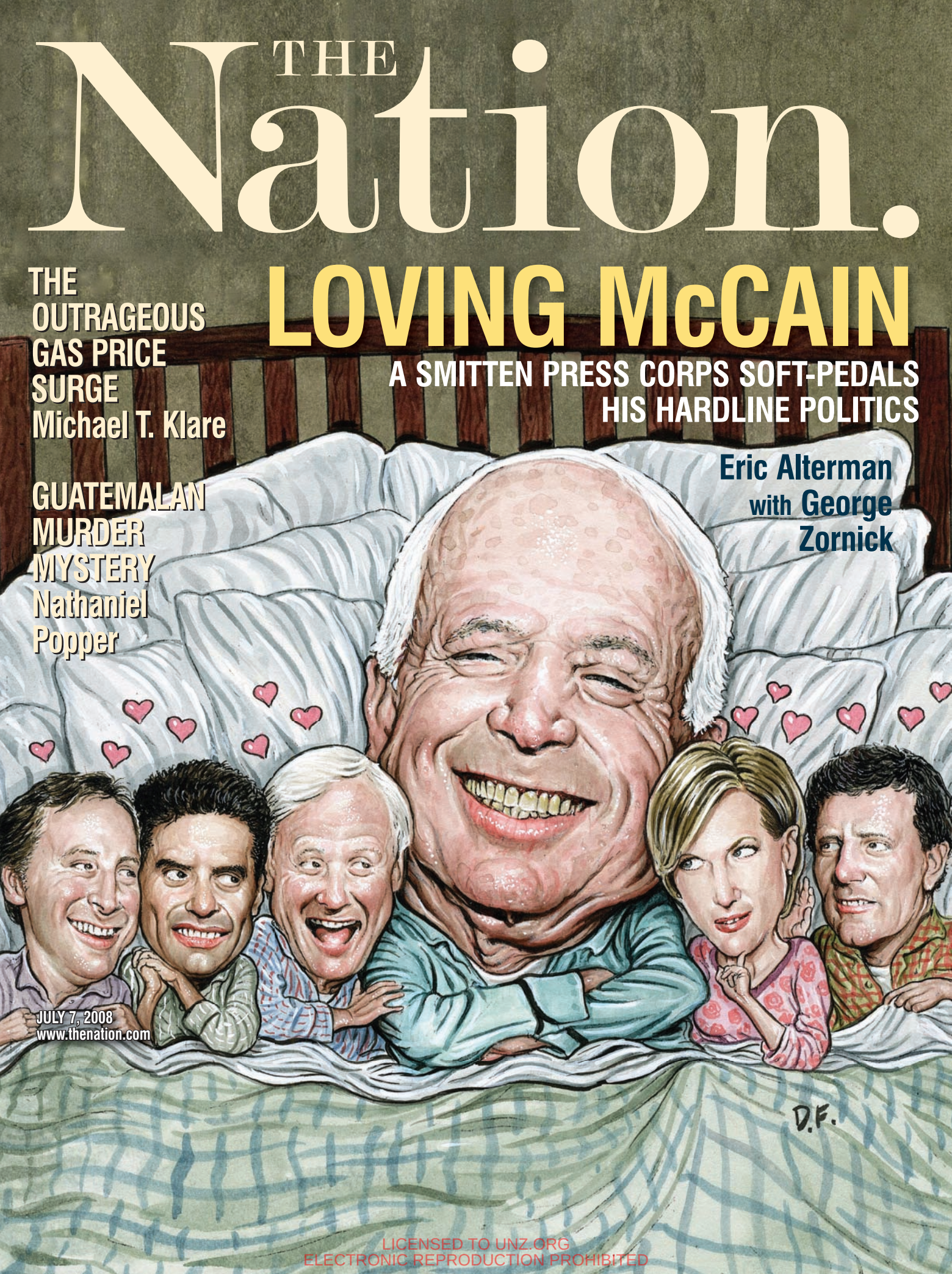

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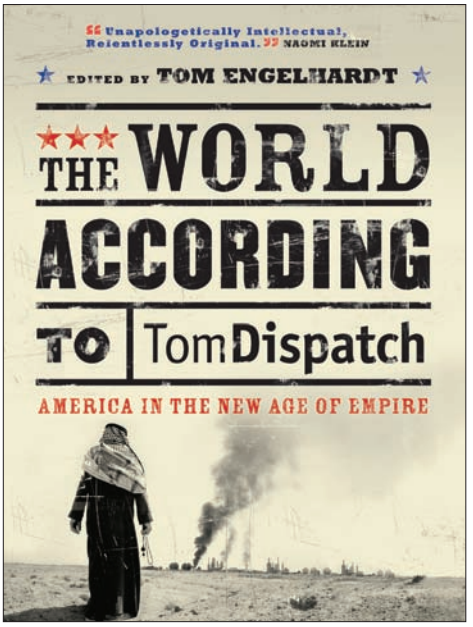
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Letters

Obama No Boomer

Lakewood, Ohio
Alexander Cockburn is one of my favorites, as are all your columnists. Everybody. But I must take exception to his June 9 column, "From Palmyra to Obama." His take on history is great. Indeed, Palmyra *was* a victim of the fortunes of the Roman Empire. There is a lesson to be learned. However… We are not Rome. We are America.

The world will absolutely be a better place merely by the fact of Bush's absence. No doubt. (He'll be missed like Herbert Hoover. Now we need another FDR.) And it will be a better place because, unlike Bush, Clinton, Cockburn or myself, Barack Obama is not a baby boomer. Big plus. Besides his brains, class and heart, his youth gives him a huge leg up on anybody in sight. This guy deserves the complete support of what Hunter S. Thompson called a doomed generation. After our statistical hogging of the culture, the least we can do is get out of the way. It's their turn.
Leonard F. Bukosky

Technically, Cockburn is not a boomer. —Ed.

Crime: Driving While Hispanic

Columbia, S.C.
Thank you for Roberto Lovato's "Juan Crow in Georgia" [May 26]. Very few media sources shed any light on the other side of the illegal immigration issue. It seems that in this country being Hispanic is becoming a crime. I am a US citizen of Mexican descent, and my wife is a legal resident. We fear these oppressive laws because they are not just targeting illegal immigrants but also legal Hispanics. They open up a lot of racial profiling by law enforcement. Here in South Carolina, the government is starting to pass oppressive laws similar to those of Georgia. We've witnessed state troopers putting traffic stops in Hispanic neighborhoods and asking for driver's licenses. I have heard of cases across the country similar to the one in the article, where citizens of Latino descent are interrogated and even turned in to ICE. In Phoenix this happened to a citizen who was third-generation Mexican-American. His "crime" was that he was Hispanic. We fear the same will happen to us if we ever encounter local law enforcement on the road.
Raymond Nunez

East Lansing, Mich.
When nearly all forms of elite capital are freely permitted to cross national jurisdictions, working classes are unfairly disadvantaged by immigration policies that prevent them from selling their labor to the highest bidder. If the international community is keen on allowing big business the flexibility to relocate jobs across national borders, doesn't justice require permitting labor the right to follow?
Steven Schoonover

Salt Lake City
Roberto Lovato writes, "Georgia's estimated 500,000 undocumented immigrants must think twice before seeking emergency support at hospitals or clinics because of laws that require them to prove their legal status before receiving many state benefits." Since 1986, the Emergency Medical Treatment and Active Labor Act (EMTALA) has provided open access to US hospitals' emergency departments regardless of ability to pay, citizenship or insurance status for patients presenting an emergency condition. This is an unfunded mandate, and 50 percent of emergency care is not reimbursed to the providing hospital. Hospitals have been fined for noncompliance with EMTALA. No state law can supersede the federal statute. Changes in state laws affecting benefits (Medicaid being a state benefit) will certainly decrease hospital reimbursement but do not directly affect access to care for the undocumented.

The United States has one of the most comprehensive and generous provisions of emergency care in the world. Most wealthy nations with "universal coverage" exclude undocumented immigrants from their definition of "universal," and

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The Audacity of Insiders

Barack Obama's success in the Democratic primaries marked the astounding victory of an insurgent over the establishment candidate. In his campaign Obama inspired millions of Americans with his vision of change, and he denounced the Washington elite for starting the war in Iraq and conducting a domestic policy that favored corporations and the wealthy.

EDITORIAL

Now Obama has stumbled into embarrassing questions about his commitment to that message of change. It wouldn't be the first time a Democratic presidential candidate talked about sweeping change, won over the party faithful and ordinary voters, and then abandoned them to powerful interests. But we believe Obama is better than that, and if he plans to transform Washington politics, as he has repeatedly and eloquently said he is committed to doing, he needs to resist turning to the brotherhood of cozy insiders to chart the way.

Obama's first stumble came from revelations that Washington's consummate insider, Jim Johnson, the former Fannie Mae CEO named to vet Obama's list of vice presidential possibles, harvested favorable mortgage loans from Countrywide Financial and was an influential promoter of the sky-high CEO compensation Obama criticizes. This smells like business as usual. Johnson quickly withdrew from Obama's operation, but the episode is a vivid reminder that Washington's ethical dry rot is not limited to Republicans.

Next, Obama announced that an acolyte of Citigroup chair Robert Rubin would head his economic policy team. Jason Furman, an economist who served under Rubin in the Clinton Administration and recently headed the center-right Hamilton Project, seems worse than indifferent to labor issues. In his writings he has sneered at the union-led coalition campaigning for better wages and benefits at Wal-Mart. It's hard to believe Furman will be an honest broker for internal economic debates.

Once again, the implicit question is, will Obama walk the walk of change or merely talk the talk? And why did the presumptive Democratic nominee rush to name Furman just three days after Hillary Clinton ended her campaign? Many insiders saw it as a reassuring signal to Wall Street: the financial-corporate establishment need not worry about Obama's occasional critical remarks on trade or other economic matters.

That prospect sends a chill through many liberal-labor hearts, because it looks like Obama is taking the first steps in the Clinton twist—the abrupt reversal Bill Clinton executed at the start of his presidency, betraying his promise of "putting people first" by handing economic policy over to Rubin and Federal Reserve chair Alan Greenspan. Obama has shown the potential for a healthier policy through consultations with progressive economists like James Galbraith and Jared Bernstein—but we worry that this promising new leader could be swallowed up by the same old crowd that over the years has stripped the Democratic Party of its principled convictions.

It's not news that Obama relies on established players for advice and helpful connections. But if he wins in November, and then follows their ideological prescriptions, his presidency will be in trouble. The economy is deteriorating dramatically. The housing crisis threatens many thousands of families with ruin, and exploding gas prices and healthcare costs have brought immense pain not just to the poor but to millions of working- and middle-class Americans. The economy will not recover if the next President simply repeats Rubinomics.

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VOLUME 287, NUMBER 1, JULY 7, 2008
PRINTED JUNE 18

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Linda Mamoun talks with Richard Falk

Robert Dreyfuss: When puppets attack

Nick Stillman: Robert Guston

AROUND THE NATION

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This Brave Nation

Hard times may give Obama the chance to become a reform President who really does rearrange power on behalf of the people. But he'll need pressure from the millions of grassroots activists he inspired in the nomination battle to overcome the intimidating power of Wall Street and the energy and insurance lobbies. The best way to support Obama is not by remaining silent and giving him a pass. Citizens who believe in a more fair and just America should keep the pressure on in various ways, reminding him of his compelling challenge to the "trickle-down, on-your-own philosophy that says there's nothing government can do about the problems we face."

A Blow Against Gitmo

More than six years after the first prisoners were brought to Guantánamo—bound, gagged and blindfolded—the Supreme Court has declared that they have a constitutional right to challenge the legality of their detention in federal court. The decision, issued June 12, handed the Bush Administration its most profound defeat yet in the legal "war on terror" and gave the rule of law its greatest victory. No detainee will be immediately released; the Court ruled only that the courthouse door is constitutionally open. But the decision means that, once and for all, Guantánamo is no longer a "law-free zone."

As the four dissenting Justices loudly proclaimed, the decision in *Boumediene v. Bush* was truly groundbreaking. For the first time in its history, the Supreme Court declared unconstitutional a law enacted by Congress and signed by the President on an issue of military policy in a time of armed conflict. For the first time the Court extended constitutional protections to noncitizens outside US territory during wartime.

As recently as 2001 the Court had stated—without reasoning—that the Constitution was of no solace to foreign nationals outside our borders. And for only the third time in its history, the Court declared unconstitutional a federal law restricting federal court jurisdiction. The Court has consistently sought to avoid such confrontations, because the political branches' control of the Court's jurisdiction is seen as conferring democratic legitimacy on an unelected institution.

But in another way, the decision was not unprecedented. It vindicated the right to a "writ of habeas corpus," an ancient form of judicial remedy that dates back to the Magna Carta, and guarantees prisoners the right to challenge the legality of their detentions in court. And the decision also fits comfortably with an important transnational trend of recent years, in which courts of last resort have played an increasingly aggressive role in invalidating security measures that trench on individual rights. The Law Lords in Britain, the Supreme Courts of Canada and Israel, and the Constitutional Court of Germany have all issued major decisions in recent years restricting political prerogative on issues of terrorism and national security in the name of individual rights.

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Noted.

THE END OF THE EXILE? The crackdown on Russian media is a familiar story. Certainly, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal* and particularly the *Washington Post* are quick to hurl charges of authoritarianism, autocracy, even Stalinism at the Kremlin and Putin whenever free speech in Russia is threatened. So why haven't all those influential mainstream newspapers reported on the silencing of Moscow's English-language alt-newspaper **The eXile**?

The eXile was forced to shut down June 11 after a surprise on-site audit by the Russian authorities. There are different theories as to why those authorities moved against the paper at this time. Some believe the crackdown was connected to the newspaper's regular columnist, **Eduard Limonov**, a radical opposition leader, or to an ongoing clan war in the Kremlin that the paper had been reporting on. But the explanation is less important than the silence of the American media.

Launched in 1997, the tabloid rocked Moscow's expat community with a mix of gonzo-style journalism, meticulous reporting, hard-hitting political analysis, quirky columns and sophomoric, often scatological humor. There was also a seriousness of purpose. Co-founders **Matt Taibbi**, now a correspondent for *Rolling Stone*, and **Mark Ames** scrutinized and exposed what they saw as inaccurate and ideologically slanted reporting by US correspondents in Moscow, especially their apologias for the misery caused by the US-backed shock-therapy reforms in the Boris Yeltsin years. *The eXile*'s annual "Worst Foreign Correspondent in Moscow" contest was dreaded by many—and cheered by a few, including this magazine. (For an example of their keen press criticism, see Taibbi and Ames's "The *Journal*'s Russia Scandal" in the October 4, 1999, issue of *The Nation*.) *The eXile* was an equal-opportunity critic, contemptuous as well of US academics who took the same line.

Could the reason for the strange silence of the US press about *The eXile*'s fate be that the Moscow paper relentlessly attacked many of these same outlets for adhering to Washington's line after the end of the Soviet Union? The outcry in other countries is telling. For more than a week, *The eXile*'s closing has been a prominent story in Germany's *Der Spiegel*, in a leading Dutch magazine and paper, and in one of Hungary's daily papers. It has even been reported in Russia's "unfree" media.

I asked Ames, *The eXile*'s chief editor in recent years, why he thinks the US mainstream media did not respond quickly. "It doesn't fit their simple propaganda," Ames told me. "Putin is an oppressor—except when he oppresses something that the American mainstream media doesn't approve of either. Americans have proven that it's not oppression or censorship they oppose—it's opposition to America that they oppose. We've angered most of the Western press corps for eleven straight years by constantly calling them on their hypocrisy and idiocy, so the last thing they want to do is give us an honorable send-off, despite all their pieties about 'supporting free speech that you disagree with.' It's censorship by silence, the most lethal of all, and it really sickens all of us to see it."

The day we went to press, the *Wall Street Journal* finally ran a story about *The eXile*'s closing. Meanwhile, abandoned by almost all of their fellow American journalists, the *eXile* editors have launched a fundraiser on their website (exile.ru) in an effort to keep an online edition afloat. KATRINA VANDEN HEUVEL

REMEMBERING STEWART: My first encounter with **Stewart Mott**'s generosity was in 1975. I had come to Washington as an intern with the **Indochina Resource Center**, a key group in the opposition to the Vietnam War. Stewart, who died June 12, was funding it. In my first week on the job, I spent an afternoon stuffing envelopes for another critical group, the **Coalition to Stop Funding the War**; Stewart gave the coalition its first grant. As I moved around Washington, I watched Stewart's visionary funding speed up the end of an immoral war. Since then, I have revisited the room in which I was stuffing envelopes hundreds of times; the conference room of the building Stewart purchased decades ago and opened to the progressive community: 122 Maryland Avenue, a stone's throw from the Supreme Court. Hundreds of progressive gatherings enliven that space each year.

Five years ago, as I joined the board of another bold creation of Stewart's (**The Fund for Constitutional Government**), my **Institute for Policy Studies** colleague **Marc Raskin** told me about the critical role Stewart had played in coaxing some members of Congress into the impeachment of **Richard Nixon**. I walked into my first board meeting, and there was Stewart in a bright-orange shirt and pants, eagerly exhorting the board to embrace the impeachment of Bush and Cheney. The Fund's ever strategic director, **Conrad Martin**, was attempting to steer the discussion back to the agenda, but Stewart would have nothing to do with it. The President and Vice President had violated the Constitution, and the Constitution called for their impeachment. JOHN CAVANAGH

A TRADE TURNABOUT? In his recent interview with **Fortune** magazine, **Barack Obama** sends mixed signals about US trade policy. Asked by the business journal about his primary-season declarations that NAFTA was "devastating" and "a big mistake"—as well as his suggestion that he'd use an opt-out clause as "a hammer" to force changes that would be more favorable to workers and farmers—Obama replied, "Sometimes during campaigns the rhetoric gets overheated and amplified.… Politicians are always guilty of that, and I don't exempt myself." Obama also told *Fortune* that he no longer believes in unilaterally reopening NAFTA and earned praise from the magazine for "toning down his populist rhetoric." If he keeps this up, Obama will also receive a thank-you note from **John McCain**, a militant supporter of free trade, a position that ought to hurt him in states like Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, where surveys show widespread anti-free-trade sentiment. Only if Obama goes soft on trade issues will McCain have a serious chance to win over these disgruntled working-class voters. Unfortunately, Obama seems to be doing just that. It's a mistake Democrats like **Al Gore** and **John Kerry** have made in the past. JOHN NICHOLS

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At issue in *Boumediene* was whether habeas corpus, guaranteed in the Constitution, extends to foreign nationals held at Guantánamo. In 2004 the Court ruled in its first Guantánamo case, *Rasul v. Bush*, that a federal statute granting habeas review extended to Guantánamo. But that decision was superseded when, in the Military Commissions Act, a Republican-majority Congress did George W. Bush's bidding and sought to strip the courts of habeas jurisdiction over detainees' claims. As a result, the Court in *Boumediene* was confronted with the question of whether Guantánamo detainees have a constitutional right to habeas corpus—that is, one that cannot be taken away unless Congress suspends the writ in times of "rebellion or invasion."

The difference between a constitutional and a statutory decision may seem technical, but it is in fact profound. The Court's decision in *Rasul*, that habeas was available as a statutory matter, simply required an interpretation of a statute and left Congress free to respond, as it did, by changing the law. The *Boumediene* decision, by contrast, required the Court to thwart the will of the President and Congress acting together and to do so on constitutional grounds, which are far less susceptible to a political override.

That the Court was willing to go as far as it did is due largely to Guantánamo's having become the symbol of the Administration's hostility to the rule of law in its "war on terror." Courts, judges and prominent jurists around the world have condemned Guantánamo. In May Canada's Supreme Court unanimously ruled that Canadian officials had to disclose evidence obtained from a Canadian detained there, resting its decision squarely on the proposition that the Guantánamo detentions were unlawful. The prison camp has become such an international embarrassment that Bush, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and both presumptive presidential candidates have said they would like to see it closed.

Boumediene was ultimately about the role that law and courts should play in the "war on terror." We should celebrate that the Supreme Court stood up to an Administration that has effectively declared war on the very heart of what the Court itself is about—the rule of law. But the case was decided by a single vote, underscoring how critical the next election will be for the future of constitutional law in this country.

DAVID COLE

David Cole, Nation *legal affairs correspondent, is the author of* Justice at War: The Men and Ideas That Shaped America's War on Terror, *just out from New York Review Books.*

Calvin Trillin, Deadline Poet

Tim Russert

We see Brother Russert displaying his skills
In heaven, surrounded by Buffalo Bills.

Anatomy of a Price Surge

As the pain induced by higher oil prices spreads to an ever growing share of the American (and world) population, pundits and politicians have been quick to blame assorted villains—greedy oil companies, heartless commodity speculators and OPEC. It's true that each of these parties has contributed to and benefited from the steep run-up. But the sharp growth in petroleum costs is due far more to a combination of soaring international demand and slackening supply—compounded by the ruinous policies of the Bush Administration—than to the behavior of those other actors.

COMMENT

Most, if not all, the damage was avoidable. Shortly after taking office, George W. Bush undertook a sweeping review of US energy policy aimed at expanding the nation's supply of vital fuels. The "reality is the nation has got a real problem when it comes to energy," he declared on March 14, 2001. "We need more sources of energy." At that time many of the problems evident today were already visible. Energy demand in mature industrial nations was continuing to grow as the rising economic dynamos of Asia, especially China, were beginning to make an impact. By 2002 the Energy Department was predicting that China would soon overtake Japan, becoming the world's second-largest petroleum consumer, and that developing Asia as a whole would account for about one-fourth of global consumption by 2020. Also evident was an unmistakable slowdown in the growth of world production, the telltale sign of an imminent "peaking" in global output [see Klare, "Beyond the Age of Petroleum," November 12, 2007].

With these trends in mind, many energy experts urged the White House to minimize future reliance on oil, emphasize conservation and rapidly develop climate-friendly alternatives, especially renewables like wind, solar, geothermal and biofuels. But Dick Cheney, who was overseeing the energy review, would have none of this. "Conservation may be a sign of personal virtue," the Vice President famously declared in April 2001, "but it is not a sufficient basis…for sound, comprehensive energy policy." After three months of huddling in secret with top executives of leading US energy companies, he released a plan on May 17 that, in effect, called for preserving the existing energy system, with its heavy reliance on oil, coal and natural gas.

Because continued reliance on oil would mean increased reliance on imported petroleum, especially from the Middle East, Bush sought to deflect public concern by calling for drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and other protected areas. As a result, most public discourse on the Bush/Cheney plan focused on drilling in ANWR, and no attention was paid to the implications of increased dependence on imported oil—even though oil from ANWR, in the most optimistic scenario, would reduce US need for imports (now about 60 percent) by just 4 percent.

But this produced another dilemma for Bush: increased reliance on imports meant increased vulnerability to disruptions in delivery due to wars and political upheavals. To address this danger, the Administration began planning for stepped-up military involvement in major overseas oil zones, especially the Persian Gulf. This was evident, for example, when then–

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Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld gave early priority to enhancement of American "power projection" to areas of instability in the developing world. Then came 9/11 and the "war on terror"—giving the White House a perfect opportunity to accelerate the military expansion and to pursue other key objectives. High on the list was the elimination of Saddam Hussein, long considered the most potent challenger to US domination of the Gulf and its critical energy supplies.

But the invasion of Iraq—intended to ensure US control of the Gulf and a stable environment for the expanded production and export of its oil—has had exactly the opposite effect. Despite the many billions spent on oil infrastructure protection and the thousands of lives lost, production in Iraq is no higher today than it was before the invasion. Iraq has also become a rigorous training ground for extremists throughout the region, some of whom have now migrated to the oil kingdoms of the lower Gulf and begun attacking the facilities there—generating some of the recent spikes in prices.

Then there is the dilemma posed by Iran. With Saddam out of the picture, the Islamic regime in Tehran is viewed in Washington as the greatest threat to US mastery of the Gulf. This threat rests largely on Iran's ability to attack oil shipping in the Gulf and ignite unrest among militant Shiite groups throughout the region, but its apparent pursuit of nuclear weapons has inflated the perceived menace significantly. To restrain Tehran's nuclear ambitions, Washington has imposed economic sanctions on Iran and forced key US allies to abandon plans for developing new oilfields there. As a result Iran, with the world's second-largest reserves after Saudi Arabia, is producing only about half the oil it could—another reason for the global constriction of supply.

But the Administration's greatest contribution to the rising oil prices is its steady stream of threats to attack Iran if it does not back down on the nuclear issue. The Iranians have made it plain that they would retaliate by attempting to block the flow of Gulf oil and otherwise cause turmoil in the energy market. Most analysts assume, therefore, that an encounter will produce a global oil shortage and prices well over $200 per barrel. It is not surprising, then, that every threat by Bush/Cheney (or their counterparts in Israel) has triggered a sharp rise in prices. This is where speculators enter the picture. Believing that a US-Iranian clash is at least 50 percent likely, some investors are buying futures in oil at $140, $150 or more per barrel, thinking they'll make a killing if there's an attack and prices zoom over $200.

It follows, then, that while the hike in prices is due largely to ever increasing demand chasing insufficiently expanding supply, the Bush Administration's energy policies have greatly intensified the problem. By seeking to preserve our oil-based energy system at any cost, and by adding to the "fear factor" in international speculation through its bungled invasion of Iraq and bellicose statements on Iran, it has made a bad problem much worse.

What can be done to reverse this predicament? There is no realistic hope of substantially increasing the supply of oil—drilling in offshore US waters, as favored by President Bush and Senator John McCain, will not reverse the long-term decline in US production—so it is only by reducing demand that fundamental market forces can be addressed. This is best done through a comprehensive program of energy conservation, expanding public transit and accelerating development of energy alternatives. It will take time for some of these efforts to have an impact on prices; others, like reducing speed limits and adding bus routes, would have a more rapid effect. And if this Administration truly wanted to spare Americans further pain at the pump, there is one thing it could do that would have an immediate effect: declare that military force is not an acceptable option in the struggle with Iran. Such a declaration would take the wind out of the sails of speculators and set the course for a drop in prices.

MICHAEL T. KLARE

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Where's the Beef?

COMMENT

Readers of the June 11 *New York Times* had a right to be startled by a front-page photo showing tens of thousands of demonstrators flooding the streets of Seoul—first because the paper had barely covered six weeks of previous protests, and second because the multitudes of people seemed out of proportion to the supposed issue at hand: fears of mad cow disease should imports of American beef resume after a five-year embargo. But the real beef was with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak, who barely got inaugurated before running off to brown-nose George W. Bush. Lee's bright idea was to push a new hard line with North Korea, even after Bush had given up that hard line, and to cozy up to Bush without a lot of apparent thought to his capricious policies toward Korea or the likelihood that the next American President will not be a Republican. Everywhere else in the world people are counting the days until Bush returns to Texas—but not in Seoul's Blue House. This fundamental miscalculation turned a landslide victory last December into such burgeoning discontent that many analysts wonder if Lee can hold on to power.

At the heart of the problem is the perception that Lee is toadying up to an Administration that runs roughshod over Korean national sovereignty and could care less about the unprecedented warming of relations between North and South over the past decade. President Kim Dae Jung's "sunshine policy" did more to enhance peace and reconciliation between the two Koreas than all his predecessors combined and won him the 2000 Nobel Peace Prize. His protégé and successor, Roh Moo-hyun, continued this policy through five years of intense American pressure and criticism. Both presidents were ultimately vindicated when the Bush Administration swiveled 180 degrees in early 2007 and talked directly with the North. But along came President Lee, blaming his predecessors for coddling the North over "ten lost years." Beltway pundits fell all over themselves applauding Lee's sagacity—finally the adults were running Korea again—and Bush rewarded Lee with a weekend visit to Camp David in April. The new Korean president brought with him what appeared to be a modest offering: lifting the ban on American beef imports.

Kim Dae Jung was the first foreign leader to visit the Bush

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Oval Office, in March 2001, close on the heels of Secretary of State Colin Powell, saying he wanted to continue the Kim/Clinton policy of engaging North Korea. Instead President Bush lectured the South Korean president on how Kim Jong Il, a leader Bush would later call a "pygmy," could not be trusted. In September 2002 Bush sent an envoy to Pyongyang to accuse the North of having a second nuclear weapons program using highly enriched uranium. The predictable result was the North's rapid repudiation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, the end of the eight-year freeze on its plutonium facility and the recovery of some 8,000 plutonium fuel rods—enough for five or six atomic bombs. (As it happened, US intelligence on the North's highly enriched uranium was no better than it was on Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction.)

In these same years Pew, Gallup and domestic Korean opinion polls uniformly showed a sharp spike in unfavorable views of the United States, clearly a result of the Bush Administration's policy shift. According to William Watts of Potomac Associates, a Washington consulting firm, Koreans with somewhat or very favorable views of the United States dropped from 75 percent at one point in the 1990s to 53 percent during the Bush Administration, while somewhat or very unfavorable views spiked to 43 percent. This downturn delayed a free-trade agreement between the two nations, a deal now held hostage by the demonstrations and by Democrats in Congress who, in an election year, have demanded that Korea open its market to American beef and automobiles before ratifying the agreement. (Although imports of American cars have increased in recent years, it is still a novelty to spot a Ford or Chevrolet on the streets of Seoul.) Barack Obama, trying to shore up support among blue-collar workers, supports these demands as well. But in Seoul well-organized farmers' groups and labor unions don't want to be buffaloed by Lee's new, supplicant regime and are determined to resist American pressure. Last year, President Roh Moo-hyun's support for the free trade deal amid a stagnating economy caused his popularity to plummet, thus bringing Lee to power in an election based almost entirely on economic issues. But now "free trade" has heavily politicized Korean-American relations.

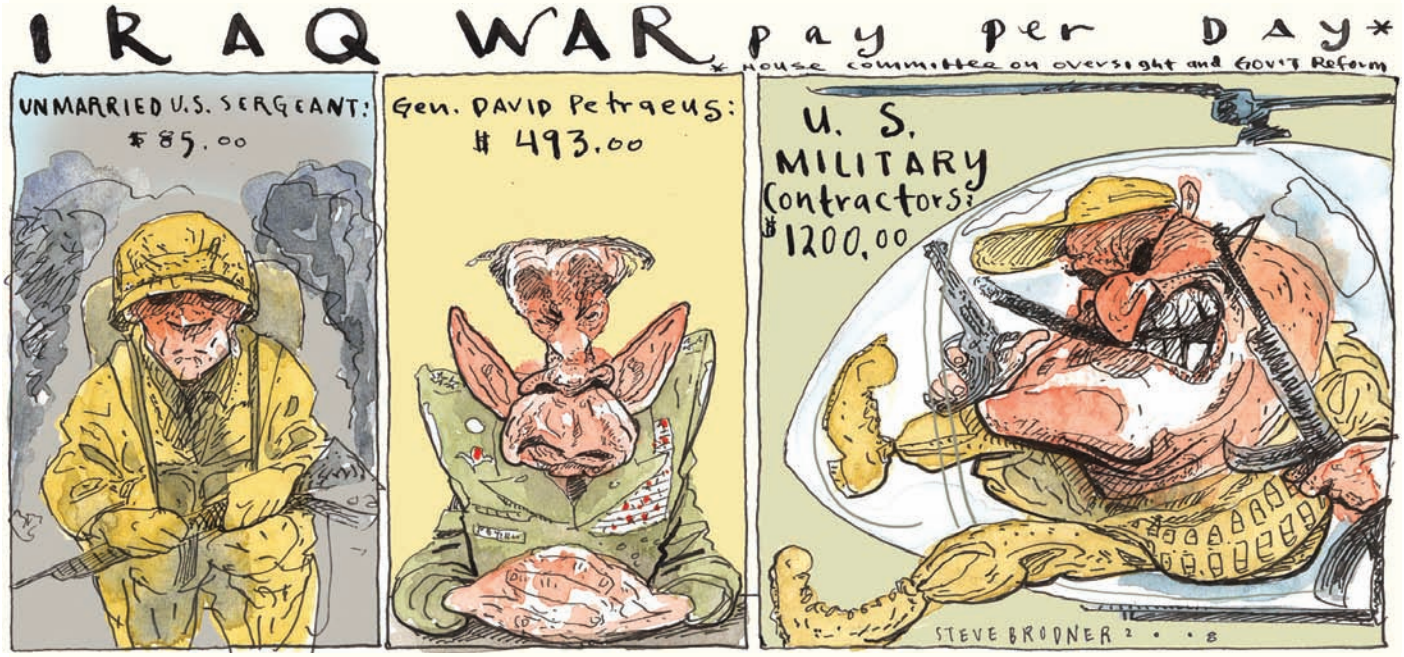
Meanwhile George W. Bush decided that Kim Jong Il was a pygmy he could deal with after all, resulting in the February 13, 2007, agreement on denuclearization—the origins of which remain very murky. Recall that Pyongyang celebrated American Independence Day in 2006 by blowing off one long-range Taepodong 2 missile and several medium-range rockets, and followed that in October with its first nuclear test. So why did Bush, who says he does not "reward bad behavior" and had rejected direct talks with North Korea, suddenly embrace negotiations? However it happened, the plutonium reactor is again frozen, and we again wait to see if the North will give up its nuclear program and if Washington will do its part by normalizing relations with Pyongyang.

Washington's intentions toward Pyongyang have been at the heart of South Korean perceptions of American sincerity and good will: that's where the beef is. The past seven years have seen an astonishing spectacle in which an impulsive American President zigzagged from gratuitous insults thrown at the North Korean head of state to charges of new nuclear programs based on flimsy evidence, only to jump on Kim Dae Jung's merry-go-round of give-and-take diplomacy. Lee Myung-bak's election appeared to signal a return to the good old days when neither Korean nor American leaders paid much attention to Korean public opinion. But a small matter of beef imports has put masses of Koreans into the streets and threatens to trample the very foundations of Korean-American relations. BRUCE CUMINGS

Bruce Cumings, chair of the history department at the University of Chicago, is the author, most recently, of North Korea: Another Country.

Comix Nation

by STEVE BRODNER



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War Is Personal

Sgt. José Pequeño / Age 34 / Sugar Hill, New Hampshire

Photograph and interview by Eugene Richards

PHOTO ESSAY

José was the youngest police chief in the state of New Hampshire, forever. But then he was in the National Guard, and they asked for volunteers. It was on March 1, 2006. They were guarding an Iraqi police station and got a tip it was going to be hit. One of the bombers' cars hit the police station, blew it up, and my son was calling in to base when they threw a grenade through the open part of the Humvee. The driver died instantly. When they found José, the lower part of his body was still inside the Humvee but the explosion had gone under his helmet and the left part of his brain was out in the sand.

I used to work nights. I got home at 7 AM, couldn't sleep, when there was a phone call. "We need to notify you that your son had an accident and is in surgery." But they couldn't give me any news how bad he was. I hung up, called my daughter and his dad, then kept calling Casualty Affairs every fifteen minutes. "As soon as we know, ma'am." Then, "They're flying him into Germany." Finally, when he got to Germany, they told me it was an injury on the head. "How bad is it?" "He's getting cleaned up, but we don't know the extent of the injury." I finally got to a nurse. "You tell me." "I'll have a neurosurgeon call." Two o'clock in the morning, I got a call from the neurosurgeon. "I'm still evaluating your son. I'll call you when I'm done." "How long?" "I've got like twenty minutes to go." And I said, "You've got twenty-two minutes. I'm his mom, for God's sake."

Twenty-five minutes later I got a call. A voice said, "Is this your son?" "Yes." "Such a beautiful son," he said. "What a terrible waste, a young man with such a life ahead of him, and he's going to die." Right there, a piece of me just left. "You're such a liar!" I yelled. "Of course my son is going to make it." After that, I asked, "Are you finished with your evaluation? Tell me exactly what's wrong with my son. Please." And he said, "He has a severe brain injury, severe bleeding; he's lost the bottom two lobes of his brain." And at that time, my daughter's boyfriend heard me scream and fall off the bed. I started throwing things. My next-door neighbor came running, and I sat down and cried and said, "I can't do this."

—Nelida Bagley

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Alexander Cockburn

The Canonization of St. Tim

The delirium in the press at Tim Russert's passing has been strange. As a broadcaster he was not much better than average, which is saying very little. He could be a sharp questioner, but not when it really counted and when courage was required. He was tough with George Bush in a February 2004 interview. He taxed him with faking the reasons to attack Iraq. But in the years before the 2003 attack, I used to hear Russert being merciless to those questioning whether Saddam Hussein had the nukes and bioweapons alleged by the Bush Administration and its co-conspirators in the press, prominent among them Russert himself.

Russert and his staff ignored efforts by watchdogs like Sam Husseini and others to get him to stop telling lies to the effect that it was Saddam who threw out the UNSCOM weapons inspectors, whereas it was Richard Butler, the head of UNSCOM, who pulled out the inspectors, apparently at the instigation of the United States. As Husseini correctly writes, "This lie, echoed through much of the political-media system around the time Russert told it, helped set the stage for the invasion after 9/11."

If Russert had rocked the boat in any serious way he'd have had more enemies. The right-wingers didn't care for Walter Cronkite, but they had no problem with Russert. Rush Limbaugh nuzzled him respectfully on the air, and so did Don Imus. Russert was always there with his watering can to fertilize myths useful to the system. On Russert's memorial show Ronald Reagan glowed in memory, up there with FDR as the twentieth century's best-loved and most popular American President. Not true at all, as Russert—trained to read polls by years of working for Mario Cuomo and Daniel Patrick Moynihan—could have found out in five minutes if he'd wanted to. Reagan had a scrawny 52 percent average approval rating for his presidency, worse than JFK, LBJ, Eisenhower, Roosevelt and Johnson. His supposed "likability" was also hugely exaggerated. But the invention of RR as the toast of the ordinary folk was necessary to validate the disgusting pigout for the very rich he inaugurated, which continues to this day.

Similarly necessary has been the notion that if it means winning the "war on terror," ordinary Americans are OK with the President (along with the US Congress) making a bonfire of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Russert helped spread that lie too, even though polls dissected in numerous accounts by press watchdogs like FAIR have shown that a narrow majority of Americans hold contrary views on the matter.

Russert spent many years working for Moynihan, who played the greasiest cards in the political deck, whoring for the Israel lobby, race-baiting for Nixon. Few were more zealous than Russert in shredding anyone with the temerity to criticize Israel. Obama, now shuffling Moynihan's greasy deck with his Father's Day sermon about black responsibility, got a dose of Russert's own race-baiting earlier this year, with a ridiculous volley of questions about Farrakhan and Wright in the February 26 debate. Any white telly pundit can make hay with Farrakhan, but when it came to high gasoline prices Russert was meek as a shoeshine boy on his show, lining up the oil execs and tugging his forelock.

After Russert's death the TV played over and over the clip of his interview with Dick Cheney, where the latter said US troops will be greeted as liberators. Russert didn't say, "What do you mean, Mr. VP? People historically despise occupying armies. Bombing historically does not win people to your side." It was a softball moment for Cheney. Russert was part of the amen chorus.

Now, after his death, in congratulating Russert, his eulogists in the press get to congratulate themselves. On *Hardball*, Chris Matthews decided to have a show much like the one he always has, stacked with Irish Catholic men. This time it was more self-conscious, but the self-consciousness of it only underscored the incredible skewed reality that the show presents day in and day out.

Matthews began with a prayer. "Hail Mary full of grace, the Lord is with Thee. [Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.]" Then he introduced guys who are on his show all the time, Mike Barnicle and Pat Buchanan. And the three of them had a kind of Irish wake on the air, laughing, remembering, talking about the importance of parochial school and the values imbued in Tim and all of them by the nuns. On and on they went, about Catholicism and the Irish, and the special quality of Irish Catholics as "truth tellers," as people who "get the bad guys"—prosecutors, G-men and journalists. Russert was put right up there in the pantheon of FBI agents, without irony, people who delve for the truth, for the light, for the greater good against the "bad guys." Matthews used that phrase, "bad guys," over and over. Then he closed the segment with the other half of the prayer: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death."

Russert, they said, was the guy who always did it better. So it was as if the closing prayer put Tim right there by the side of Mary, an interlocutor to God for the lesser lights, the Chrises and Pats and Mikes, the "sinners" who only strive to be like him.

The TV carried live shots of Russert lying in state, and the mourners could pass by and merely touch the edge of his coffin for a cure, or hope for a cure. This after seven years of craven, culpable journalism across the mainstream board. No one at this point is remembering the reporters at Knight Ridder, who were among the few in the mainstream pre-war to hammer away at the WMD argument. Russert's colleague-survivors need him as a saint. ■

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Katha Pollitt

Feminists for McCain? Not So Much

Are there feminist Hillary supporters who hate Obama so much they'll vote for McCain just to show the Democratic Party how ticked off they are? Yes, and I get e-mails from all five of them. Seriously, I'm sure there are female Hillary Clinton voters who will go for John McCain in the general election, but I don't think too many of them will be feminists. Because to vote for McCain, a feminist would have to be insane. Let me rephrase that: she would have to believe that the chief—indeed the only—goal of the women's movement is to elect Clinton, not to promote women's rights. A vote for McCain would be the ultimate face-spiting nose-cutoff. Take that, women's equality!

Not that the media will help women get it. As Eric Alterman and George Zornick exhaustively document elsewhere in this issue, the mainstream press is doing its best to persuade us that McCain is a moderate—barely distinguishable from Barack Obama—even on abortion rights, one of the brighter dividing lines between the parties. In the *Providence Journal* five days after Clinton suspended her campaign, columnist Froma Harrop was typical: "Would McCain stock the Supreme Court with foes of *Roe v. Wade*?… The answer is unclear but probably 'no.'" After all, in 1999 he told the *San Francisco Chronicle* editorial board that he "would not support repeal" of *Roe* because women would seek unsafe, illegal procedures. Since the Democrats will control Congress, Harrop figures, "McCain would probably choose a cipher" rather than get bogged down in the abortion wars. This fake shrewdness, buttressed by much use of "probably," "seems," "may" and "my guess is," has as much value as a bet by a drunk in a bar. We all have our hunches—usually they magically line up with our wishes and preferences, in Harrop's case, her support for Clinton. By the end of the column she's castigating Obama for his "present" votes on abortion bills in the Illinois Assembly, and by the time she's finished, you'd never know that NARAL and Planned Parenthood give Obama 100 percent ratings and McCain a big fat zero.

How antichoice is John McCain? Let's leave the psychological tea leaves out of it and look at his record. In his four years in the House, from 1983 to 1986, he cast eleven votes on reproductive issues. Ten were antichoice. Of 119 such votes in the Senate, 115 were antichoice, including votes for the ban on so-called partial-birth abortions and for the "gag rule," which refuses funds to clinics abroad that so much as mention abortion. In 1999, the year he said he opposed repeal of *Roe* on health grounds, he voted against a bill that would have permitted servicewomen overseas, where safe, legal abortion is often unavailable, to pay out of their own pockets for abortions in military hospitals.

His record on contraception and sex education is just as bad. He voted against a 2005 budget amendment, sponsored by Senator Hillary Clinton, that would have allotted $100 million to reduce teen pregnancy by means of education and birth control. He voted to require parental consent for birth control for teenage girls and to abolish Title X, which funds birth control and gynecological care for the poor. He voted against requiring insurance companies to pay for prescription contraception, when they pay for other prescription drugs—like, um, Viagra. The beat goes on, and on. With a handful of minor exceptions (he voted to confirm prochoice Surgeon General Dr. David Satcher after voting against prochoice Dr. Joycelyn Elders), he has a just about perfect antichoice record, including votes to confirm the Supreme Court nominations of Thomas, Roberts and Alito.

As for his 1999 pro-*Roe* remark, he has retracted it many, many times. Here he is on *Meet the Press*, May 13, 2007:

> Q: Back in 1999…you said this: "Certainly, in the short term, or even the long term, I would not support repeal of *Roe v. Wade*, which would then force X number of women in America to undergo illegal and dangerous operations."
>
> A: Well, it was in the context of conversation about having to change the culture of America as regards to this issue. I have stated time after time after time that *Roe v. Wade* was a bad decision….
>
> Q: But if *Roe v. Wade* was overturned during a McCain presidency, and individual states chose to ban abortion, would you be concerned that, as you said, X number of women in America would undergo illegal and dangerous operations?
>
> A: No, I would hope that X women in America would bring those children into birth and into life in this world.

If that's not clear enough for you, how about this: "I do not support *Roe v. Wade*, period. It should be overturned" (Associated Press, February 18, 2007). Or this, from his campaign website: "*Roe v. Wade* is a flawed decision that must be overturned."

As the Bush years have shown, the President has a tremendous amount of power; Supreme Court nominations don't begin to describe it. He nominates all the federal judges (302 since Bush took office). He appoints the heads of dozens of regulatory agencies, many of which (HHS, FDA, National Institutes of Health) directly affect women's lives. He submits legislation and the budget to Congress. He has a veto. Bush, we all know, has filled the government with right-wing Christian hacks and family-values fanatics, with room left over for incompetent cronies. He has done just about nothing good for women. McCain's record suggests he would not be any different. His opposition to the Ledbetter Act, which would have overturned the Supreme Court's restrictions on women's right to sue for paycheck discrimination, tells you everything you need to know about where he stands on economic justice for women.

The media can call John McCain a moderate all they want. No matter how aggrieved women are by Clinton's loss, I'm betting that the ones who care about women's rights are too smart to fall for it. ■

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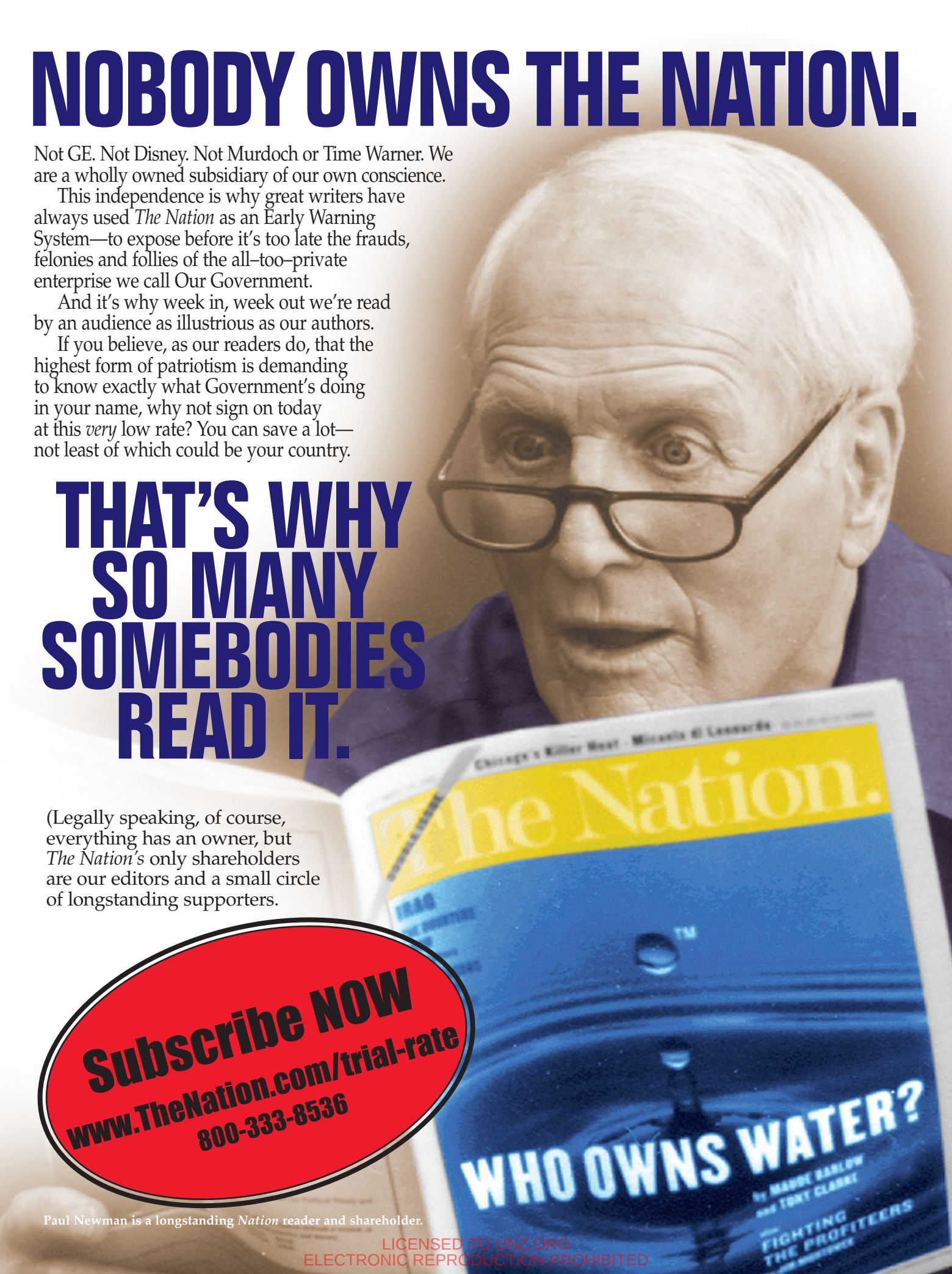

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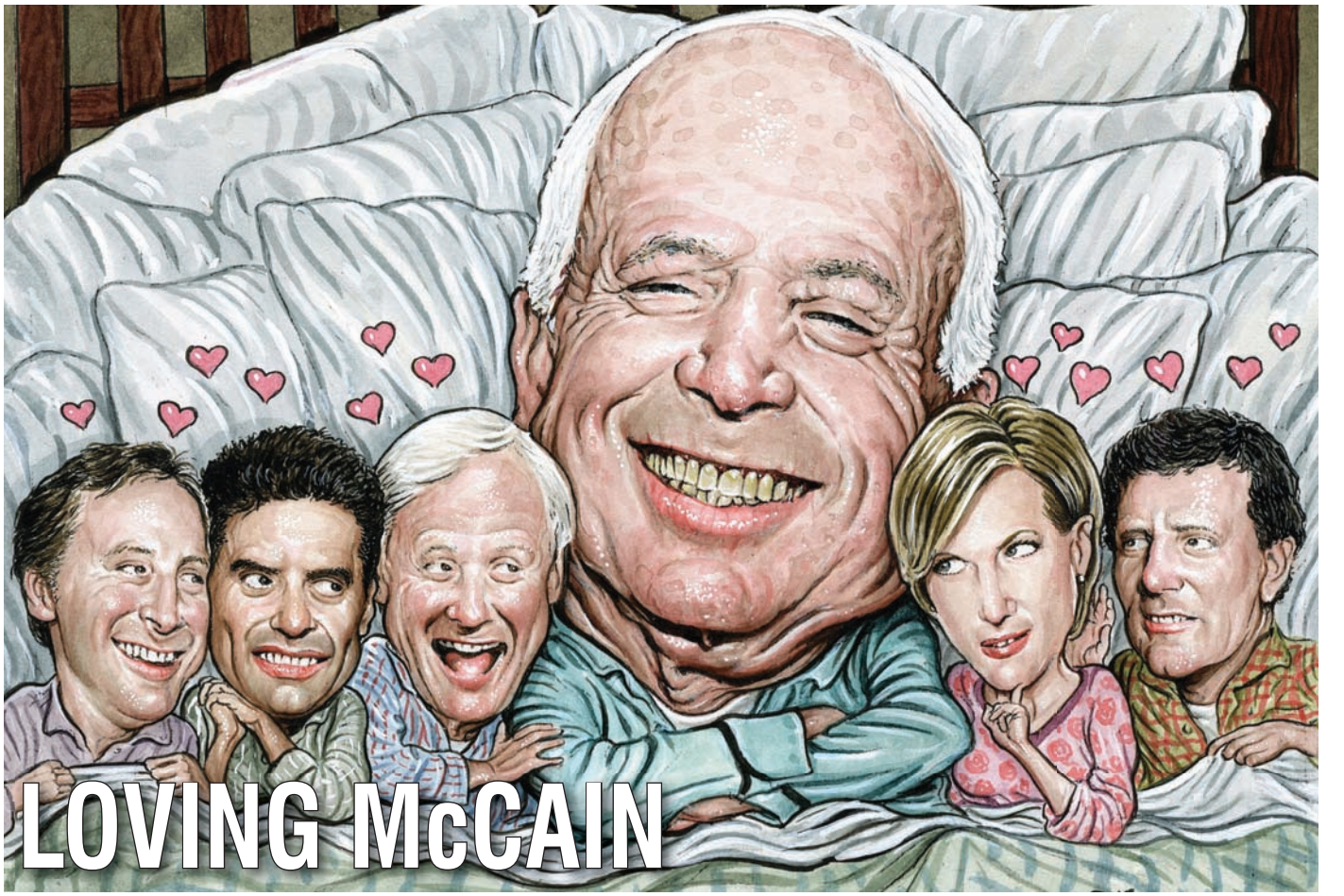

LOVING McCAIN

Besotted by his "maverick" persona, the press soft-pedals the GOP candidate's hardline politics.

by ERIC ALTERMAN WITH GEORGE ZORNICK

Like the vast majority of our 300 million or so fellow citizens—but unlike most of the elite political reporters covering the presidential campaign—your authors have never had the pleasure of meeting Arizona Senator and Republican presidential nominee John McCain. We've never sat with him in a semicircle on the red velvet couches of the Straight Talk Express downing Dunkin' Donuts and participating in endless bull sessions that long outlast our store of questions. We've never talked strategy openly with McCain and his advisers over drinks and dinner, or been fed information to use against his opponents. Perhaps even more regrettably, we have not enjoyed the pleasure of joining our media colleagues for a sunny afternoon, *chez* McCain, "swinging lazily back and forth on a tire swing strung up under a massive sycamore tree in a quiet Arizona canyon, the sound of a gushing stream nearby," as the candidate, according to *Newsweek*, "carefully monitor[ed] giant slabs of pork ribs on a smoking grill."

We've enjoyed him on *The Daily Show*, admired his courage in Vietnam and imagine we understand his appeal. Perhaps if we had all spent more time hanging, we would appreciate the senator's company, his hospitality and his eagerness to speak his mind in our presence as so much of the MSM has. It is even possible that we would call him John when speaking with him. And let's be honest, we cannot be certain that, were he still running against George W. Bush, we would not fall into the habit of referring to the McCain campaign as "we"—as in, "I hope we kill Bush"—which apparently happened with some frequency during McCain's unsuccessful 2000 run.

But even though we might be taken with McCain personally, we would like to think that we would resist the urge to offer the sort of spontaneous testimonials to his character that have gushed from the pens of so many MSM journalists. These would include calling McCain "a cool dude" (Jake Tapper, *Salon*); "an original, imaginative, and at times inspiring candidate" (Jacob Weisberg, *Slate*); "a man of unshakable character, willing to stand up for his convictions" (the late R.W. Apple Jr., *New York Times*); "a man of intelligence, honor and enormous personal and political courage" (Fareed Zakaria, *Newsweek*); "blunt, unyielding, deploying his principles.... What he does do is what he's always done, play it as straight as possible.... The maverick candidate still" (Terry Moran, ABC News's *Nightline*); "worldly-wise and witty, determined to follow the facts to the exclusion of ideology... willing to defy his own party and forge compromise...pragmatic in the service of the national interest...rises to passion when he believes that America's best values are at stake" (Michael Hirsch, *Newsweek*); "kind of like a Martin Luther"

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(Chris Matthews, MSNBC's *Hardball*); "the perfect candidate to deal with what challenges we face as a country" (Mika Brzezinski, MSNBC's *Morning Joe*); "rises above the pack… eloquent, as only a prisoner of war can be" (David Nyhan, *Boston Globe*); "the bravest candidate in the presidential race" (Dana Milbank, *Washington Post*); "an affable man of zealous, unbending beliefs" and "the hero [who] still does things his own way" (Richard Cohen, *Washington Post*); and who, in "an age of deep cynicism about politicians of both parties…is the rare exception who is not assumed to be willing to sacrifice personal credibility to prevail in any contest" (David Broder, *Washington Post*).

Believe us, we could go on (and on and on…). Suffice it to say that no candidate since John F. Kennedy, and perhaps none since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, has enjoyed such cozy relations with the press. In his book *Politicians, Partisans, and Parasites: My Adventures in Cable News*, Tucker Carlson explains the source of many journalists' attraction to the Arizona senator: "McCain ran an entire presidential campaign aimed primarily at journalists.… To a greater degree than any candidate in thirty years, McCain offered reporters the three things they want most: total access all the time, an endless stream of amusing quotes, and vast quantities of free booze." Ryan Lizza, reporting for *The New Yorker* from the current Straight Talk, notes the dichotomy of McCain's press-friendly campaign style and that of his opponents: "The Democratic candidates rarely speak to the traveling press. McCain not only packs his bus with reporters (whom he often greets with an affectionate 'Hello, jerks!') but talks until the room is filled with the awkward silence of journalists with no more questions." Lizza also notes that the "chumminess" between the campaign and the reporters has almost no boundaries. Questions of strategy—even media manipulation—are discussed openly with reporters present, and "McCain's senior advisers dine almost nightly with the people covering the candidate."

No candidate since John F. Kennedy, and perhaps none since Franklin Delano Roosevelt, has enjoyed such cozy relations with the press.

The degree to which members of the press find all this irresistible is evident by the confessions that reporters have occasionally offered in public; confessions that have few, if any, precedents in recent political history. For instance, Charles Lane, writing in the October 18, 1999, issue of *The New Republic*, admitted, "I know it shouldn't be happening, but it is. I'm falling for John McCain." His declaration followed that of Michael Lewis, who, in the same magazine, compared his feelings to "the war that must occur inside a 14-year-old boy who discovers he is more sexually attracted to boys than to girls."

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The "Never Mind" Syndrome

McCain flatters the press in other ways as well. For instance, he is particularly adept at embracing reporters' romantic notions of themselves as tough-minded, hard-charging opponents of power, particularly conservative power. After facing questions from the late Tim Russert, host of NBC's influential *Meet the Press*, he opined, "I just had my interrogation on Russert.… It's a good thing I had all that preparation in North Vietnam!" One can hardly imagine what it must have been like for McCain to endure what he did as a POW in North Vietnam, but it's hard to believe that it is an appropriate metaphor for taking questions about his main opponent in the Republican primary such as this: "Is Governor Romney waving the white flag?… Is Governor Romney suggesting surrender?"

And then there's the special treatment, given no other American politician, to allow McCain to make his case to the public. When Media Matters conducted a study of Sunday-morning network guest lists, it discovered that the most frequent invitee during the nine-year period of 1997–2005 was McCain, who had appeared 124 times—over 50 percent more than his closest competitor. What's more, not only was he the most frequent guest, he was the most honored. McCain was accorded eighty-six solo interviews. The runner-up in this solo interview sweepstakes was former Democratic Senator Tom Daschle, with just forty-five. As Senate minority leader, Daschle was the highest-ranking official in his party; McCain, who was on the outs with the leadership of his party for much of this period, was the leader of nothing but himself. In fact, during the early period of Bush's presidency, before—apparently—he decided that he wanted to be the Republican nominee for President in 2008, McCain often represented the Democratic position on questions about taxes and political reform.

McCain's legendary diversionary walks from the path of the Republican straight-and-narrow so impressed his friends in the media that they appeared to have passed a secret law among themselves never to refer to the senior Arizona senator without also using the word "maverick." As David Brock and Paul Waldman demonstrate in their book *Free Ride*, the words "maverick" and "McCain" appeared within ten words of each other 2,114 times in 2000, a practice that has continued to the present at roughly the same rate.

On issue after issue, and from every side of the journalistic political spectrum, a campaign of deception and distortion has helped to ensure that McCain's extreme positions and politically inspired flip-flops remain far from the consciousness of the average voter. Just as the media-promoted notion that George W. Bush was the kind of guy with whom one might enjoy a few beers managed to obscure the predictable catastrophes that lay in store for this nation once he became President, so too can the deep-seated media denial of McCain's extremist policies and addiction to political expediency mask the fact that his victory in November would result in a continuation—and even, in some instances, an expansion—of the very policies that have brought the nation to the brink of irreversible disaster.

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According to an extensive *Wall Street Journal*/NBC News poll taken in early May, only 27 percent of voters have positive views of the Republican Party, the lowest level for either party in the survey's nearly two-decade history. A clear majority of voters in the same survey said they wished for a Democratic President. And yet, in what the *Journal* reporters termed a "remarkable" finding, McCain remained in a dead heat with Obama and Clinton in head-to-head matchups. The authors' explanation: "McCain's image is trumping negatives such as the war and the economy." More recent polls continue to show McCain running well ahead of any generic "Republican" candidate. It's true that before the Rev. Jeremiah Wright became the most famous man in America, coverage of Obama had been extremely favorable. And McCain's easy ride has seen some speed bumps in recent weeks, regarding both his army of conflicted lobbyists/advisers and a poorly received speech on the night Obama clinched the Democratic nomination. But decades of devotion to McCain's causes and character are not likely to be erased overnight, even in the event of an unlikely U-turn on the part of most of the MSM.

The media's love of McCain manifests itself in myriad ways; sometimes it involves inventing facts, other times ignoring inconvenient ones.

Indeed, the effects of past coverage can be discerned in the results of another survey released in May, by the Pew Research Center, which found that most voters described McCain as "a centrist whose views are fairly close to their own." These voters might as well be visiting Casablanca for the waters. McCain calls himself a thoroughgoing conservative, and he's got the statistics to prove it. He has voted with his party almost 90 percent of the time this term, which puts him ahead of twenty-nine other Republicans, including his Arizona colleague Jon Kyl, who ranks second in his party's leadership. According to VoteView, McCain's voting record in 2005–06 would place him second in the contest for America's most conservative senator in the 109th Congress and eighth in the 110th Senate. McCain supported Bush in 95 percent of his votes in 2007 and has managed to achieve a perfect 100 percent score so far in 2008. But voter ignorance in the case of the "real McCain" is hardly the fault of the voters. They are simply consuming news reports from media that refuse to take McCain's politics seriously.

Examine McCain's position on any given question and compare it with the press coverage of that position. Again and again, you will see that many of the most admired and respected reporters in the business are not merely "in the tank" for McCain; they are practically unpaid members of his campaign staff.

Media love for John McCain manifests itself in myriad ways; sometimes it involves inventing facts, other times simply ignoring inconvenient ones. For instance, we learn from Media Matters that McCain made an April 1 appearance at elite Episcopal High School in Alexandria, Virginia, during his "biography" tour. But when CNN reported on the visit four days later, Jim Acosta failed to mention that McCain happened to be a graduate of this very same (very expensive) boarding school. Similarly, on the April 18 edition of *The Situation Room*, an onscreen chart showed McCain's income to be significantly lower than that of Senators Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton when combined with the income of their spouses. However, the chart did not include any income earned by McCain's spouse, Cindy, whose inherited beer-distributorship fortune is estimated to be valued in nine figures.

Such indulgences pale, however, in comparison with the lengths to which many are willing to go to portray McCain as the kind of hero they apparently wish he would be. Consider the question of whether the United States should employ torture against its prisoners. The liberal *New York Times* columnist Nicholas Kristof writes rapturously of McCain's opposition to the Bush/Cheney endorsement of illegal methods of physical pressure on prisoners because, he asserts, "There was nary a vote in the Republican primary to be gained by opposing the waterboarding of swarthy Muslim men accused of terrorism. But Mr. McCain led the battle against Dick Cheney on torture, even though it cost him donations, votes and endorsements." Kristof maintained his unwavering admiration although he was forced to mention just a few paragraphs later that the very same John McCain dropped his opposition to waterboarding because "with the arrival of the primaries, he has moved to the right on social issues and pretended to be more conservative than he is." This argument is echoed by that of another liberal pundit, Jacob Weisberg, who, in a piece subtitled "Psst… He's Not Really a Conservative," instructs voters that when considering a vote for McCain, it is necessary to "discount his repositioning a bit."

In fact, it's going to take more than "a bit" to get McCain's positions anywhere near the values and policies Americans consistently say they want from their President, much less to where McCain-smitten pundits pretend they already are. As Kristof discovered when trying to paint his profile in courage, almost everything that caused so many pundits to lose their heads and hearts to McCain during his first campaign has been jettisoned in the interests of securing the nomination of a party that is demanding—and securing—his fealty to one extremist position after another. In the same column in which Kristof lauds the pro-torture McCain for opposing torture, for instance, he also lauds the anti-immigration candidate for being pro-immigration. He writes, "Then there's immigration. While other Republican candidates revved up the mobs by debating how high a limb is optimal for hanging illegal immigrants, he patiently explained that it's a complex problem with unsatisfying solutions, including creation of a path to citizenship for illegals." Yet McCain has jettisoned this position too. To be fair, Kristof may have been confused by the bewildering manner in which McCain repudiated himself. Speaking to the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC) in Washington, McCain asserted that "on the issue of illegal immigration, a position which provoked the outspoken opposition of many conservatives, I stood my ground aware that my position would imperil

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The Truth About Coffee

PLANTATION FRESH

Hidden facts you should know about coffee, its taste and its prime brewing period.

By Joseph Sugarman

I was shocked. I didn't realize that a few simple facts about coffee could change my mind about how I buy coffee.

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Fact: Coffee is often old and stale when it arrives at your supermarket, coffee house or is shipped to your home or office. Many brands of coffee are stored in warehouses for long periods of time before being delivered.

Fact: Freshly-roasted coffee is naturally smooth tasting so if you normally add cream or sugar to mask its taste, you will use less. And as coffee ages, it loses its taste.

Fact: After roasting, coffee must go through an oxidative process to release chemical byproducts that should be allowed to escape within 72 hours after roasting. Hermetically sealing the coffee traps the chemicals and affects the coffee's taste.

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my campaign." Having done so, however, he apparently decided that his integrity had overstayed its welcome, and in that same speech promised his erstwhile adversaries that "only after we achieved widespread consensus that our borders are secure would we address other aspects of the problem in a way that defends the rule of law and does not encourage another wave of illegal immigration." This directly contradicted the principle of the bill he wrote with Senator Ted Kennedy, which would have provided a path to citizenship for many of the roughly 12 million undocumented immigrants in America. Somehow McCain paid virtually no political price for this Olympian flip-flop. It wasn't merely that MSM pundits preferred to give him a pass; many refused to recognize it at all. Nearly a month after the CPAC speech, the *Los Angeles Times* wrote that McCain's advisers "believe his work on the controversial immigration legislation that included a path to citizenship for many of the nation's illegal immigrants will provide an inroad to Latino voters."

This "never mind" syndrome regarding McCain is pervasive. Take tax policy. The old McCain of "maverick" lore was lionized in the MSM five years ago for his refusal to support his party's misguided $1.35 trillion tax-cut package and cut dividends and capital gains taxes. McCain said, "I cannot in good conscience support a tax cut in which so many of the benefits go to the most fortunate among us at the expense of middle-class Americans who most need tax relief." In 2005 he was one of just three Senate Republicans to vote against additional tax cuts for corporate America; today the same senator who opposed these cuts thinks they should be extended through 2010. Conservatives had once again claimed this maverick's scalp. As Grover Norquist, president of the anti-tax group Americans for Tax Reform, reportedly boasted, "It's a big flip-flop, but I'm happy that he's flopped."

In addition, McCain called for the repeal of the Alternative Minimum Tax and the reduction of the corporate income tax rate from 35 to 25 percent. According to the calculations of the Tax Policy Center, the overall cost over a period of ten years would amount to $5.7 trillion in revenue, or more than three times the cost of the Bush cuts. Aside from the havoc these policies would wreak with an already out-of-control deficit, they would prove even more regressive than those instituted by the Bush Administration. At a moment when working people's wages and salaries make up the lowest share of the nation's gross domestic product in more than sixty years, McCain's tax policies would, if enacted, deliver 58 percent of the benefits to the top 1 percent of taxpayers, compared with the current code, which tops out at a mere 31 percent of benefits going to the same fortunate few. Yet McCain is still accorded the "maverick" label. (After the primaries, McCain moderated his tax policies a bit and walked back a few provisions, including a new proposal to reduce, but not repeal, the AMT; his current plan would give 39.5 percent of the benefits to the top 1 percent and would create $4.1 trillion in lost revenue over ten years. We note that President Bush enacted a much larger tax cut than what he campaigned on in 2000, so it is no simple task to predict what a President McCain would propose).

Flip-Flop Free Pass

It is a challenge to find an issue on which McCain has stood his ground in the face of opposition from his party's extremist establishment. "How about abortion?" you ask. Well, speaking to the editorial board of the *San Francisco Chronicle* in August 1999, McCain explained, "Certainly in the short term, or even the long term, I would not support repeal of *Roe v. Wade*, which would then force X number of women in America" to be subject to "illegal and dangerous operations." And McCain today? "I do not support *Roe v. Wade*—it should be overturned." McCain says he favors a rape and incest exception for abortion prohibitions, but his party's platform refuses to allow for any such exceptions. If the candidate plans on fighting to get this restrictive party plank changed, however, he has kept that information secret so far. What's more, McCain has voted for every one of Bush's judicial appointments, all of whom oppose a woman's right to choose. What about gay marriage? In 2006 McCain was one of only seven Republican senators to vote against the Federal Marriage Amendment; two years later he told Chris Matthews, "I think gay marriages should be allowed" when states decide to legalize gay unions. Today McCain not only opposes gay marriage but favors denying benefits to unmarried couples, period.

It is a challenge to find an issue on which McCain has stood his ground in the face of opposition from his party's extremist establishment.

McCain's addiction to politically convenient flip-floppery is even evident regarding the issue with which his "maverick" reputation is most closely associated—political reform. Recall that much of McCain's reputation as a reformer derives from the partnership he forged with Democratic Senator Russ Feingold to try to reform the nation's campaign finance laws. He did so, he said at the time, out of a sense of remorse over his involvement with the "Keating Five," when he helped himself to free flights on Charles Keating's jets and asked regulators to go easy on the corrupt financier during a period when his wife happened to be Keating's investment partner. McCain received an Ethics Committee reprimand, and he has consistently pointed to his regret over his role in the scandal as his primary motivation for his commitment to the issue, over the objection of many in his party.

That's the theory anyway. And it is one so widely accepted by McCain's fans in the mainstream media that many do not feel an obligation to examine McCain's behavior anymore to determine whether he bothers adhering to the laws he wrote. *Time* managing editor Richard Stengel, for instance, explains that "McCain is so pure on this issue, ever since the Keating Five when he saw the light.... McCain has toed the line about lobbyists, about campaign fundraising."

In fact, McCain's devotion to remaining within his much-proclaimed ethical guidelines is a far murkier matter. It's not just his close friendship and professional relationship with lobbyist Vicki Iseman, revealed by the *New York Times*, that causes so many titters—it's that McCain flew on the private jet of Iseman's

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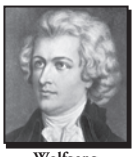
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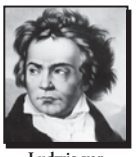
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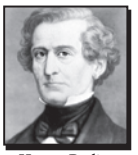
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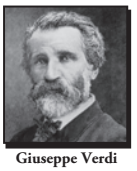
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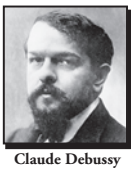
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client Lowell Paxson and repeatedly carried out legislative favors on his behalf. Paxson wasn't the only client of Iseman's who appeared to get special attention from McCain; the *Times* documented other instances where legislation introduced by McCain dovetailed with key priorities of other companies, in the telecommunications and cruise ship industries, represented by Iseman's firm—all of which contributed tens of thousands of dollars to his presidential campaign.

No less significant, candidate McCain has taken advantage of loopholes in the laws he has written and lax enforcement by an understaffed Federal Election Commission (FEC) to subvert the intended purposes of the laws. The old John McCain championed legislation that would require presidential candidates to pay the actual cost of flying on corporate jets and to pay charter rates when using such jets rather than cheaper first-class fares. The purpose was to try to reduce the power of jet-wielding lobbyists and enforce a sense of fairness. But how did McCain behave when the issue arose in his campaign? A *New York Times* investigation recently revealed that he availed himself of a jet owned by a company headed by his wife. He was able to do this without technically breaking the law only because the law makes a specific exception for planes owned by a candidate or his family (or by a privately held company they control). The FEC has sought to close this loophole, but its new rules have been prevented from going into effect, as the White House has refused—until recently—to appoint a sufficient number of commissioners to allow their approval. So while McCain may be technically within the letter of the outdated law, he is purposely undermining its spirit. What's more, these financial shenanigans are hardly consistent with the response he gave when asked by a reporter whether he planned to rely on his wife's wealth to help out with the campaign. "I have never thought about it," he told the *Arizona Republic*. "I would never do such a thing."

Such actions are of a piece with a campaign that is dominated by lobbyists to a degree unmatched by any other candidate for President this year. McCain's campaign manager, Rick Davis, co-founded a lobbying firm whose clients have included Verizon and SBC Telecommunications. His chief political adviser, Charles Black Jr., was until recently chair of one of Washington's most powerful private lobbies, BKSH and Associates, whose clients include AT&T, Alcoa, JPMorgan and US Airways—not to mention a string of dictators with shady human rights records, from Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire to Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos. In addition, his top economic adviser, former Senator Phil Gramm—who wrote the McCain campaign's banking policy—was, until April 18, registered as a lobbyist for UBS, the international banking giant deeply involved in the subprime housing market crisis. And on down the line in the McCain campaign it goes, with almost all the top positions occupied by the very people whose influence he claims to want to curb. And yet, despite a series of forced resignations over embarrassing conflicts of interest, the media narrative continues untouched by truth. Writing in the *Washington Post* in May, longtime editor David Ignatius praised McCain because he "has actually fought the kind of bipartisan battles that Obama talks about—from campaign finance to climate change to rules against torture—and he has the political scars to prove it."

In early June, *Times* reporter Charlie Savage revealed another crucial McCain flip-flop: as recently as January, McCain said he opposed George W. Bush's unconstitutional wiretaps on American citizens, explaining, "I don't think the President has the right to disobey any law." But as with so many of McCain's more moderate positions, that was then. Today, according to his top adviser Douglas Holtz-Eakin, McCain has decided that "neither the Administration nor the telecoms need apologize for actions that most people, except for the ACLU and the trial lawyers, understand were constitutional and appropriate in the wake of the attacks on September 11, 2001."

Misreading Iraq

The pattern of media misrepresentation of McCain's record extends into the area of his alleged expertise, foreign and military policy, as well. Once again, the norm among those charged with interrogating the candidate and passing this information along to the public is simply to offer up a mixture of awe and praise at the candidate's prowess. NBC political director Chuck Todd does not think it matters much whether McCain bungles a question on foreign affairs because, as he explains, "He's got enough of that in the bank, at least with the media, that he can get away with it." And Fox News anchor Brit Hume was speaking for many when he announced, on behalf of himself and his colleagues, "We all" agree that McCain has understanding and knowledge of world affairs. *Newsweek*'s Evan Thomas has gone so far as to grant McCain special permission to say things that mere mortals, or people bogged down by reality or fairness, cannot. "McCain has a license to use words that the rest of us could not.… I mean, he can be pretty out there, using words like 'surrender,' because who is really going to question John McCain?" he explains.

Given this all but unchallenged media narrative, it can be an astounding experience to scrutinize McCain's record of judgment in the harsh light of history. For instance, before the Bush Administration embarked on its disastrous course in Iraq, McCain promised that a successful US invasion would "serve as a counterpoint to the state-directed Arab media's distortion of the Palestinian conflict." He told CNN viewers on September 12, 2002, that he was "very certain that this military engagement will not be very difficult" and, a month later, that "success will be fairly easy." When asked by Chris Matthews in March 2003 whether the Iraqis would treat Americans as liberators, McCain answered, "Absolutely, absolutely." In light of these and other such predictions, it is difficult to imagine just what the editors of the *Washington Post* were thinking when they instructed readers, "Whatever your position on the war, then or now, Mr. McCain deserves credit for foresight and consistency about how the war should have been waged."

Perhaps these writers and editors were crediting McCain with views he never had and statements he never made. This turns out to be a common practice within the MSM. During a March 28 interview with Senator Chuck Hagel, Charlie Rose informed viewers that McCain "early on call[ed] for the firing of [former Defense] Secretary Rumsfeld." Two days earlier, on *MSNBC Live*, chief Washington correspondent and host Norah O'Donnell informed viewers that McCain

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had "called for Don Rumsfeld's resignation." Earlier in the month, on March 5, CNN senior political analyst Gloria Borger told viewers of *The Situation Room* that "McCain has said over and over again, you know, 'I would have fired Donald Rumsfeld'.... He called for him to be fired while...in the Senate." Alas, though McCain did, like many conservatives, criticize Rumsfeld on occasion, he most definitely never called for the Defense Secretary to resign. Just hours before Rumsfeld's "resignation" was announced, in fact, McCain was asked by Fox News's Shepard Smith, "Does Donald Rumsfeld need to step down?" McCain's answer: it was "a decision to be made by the President."

When members of the media do report McCain's misstatements on foreign policy, they tend to discount them, apologize for them or explain what the senator undoubtedly "meant" to say. When, during a March 18 press conference with reporters in Amman, Jordan, McCain falsely insisted that Iranian operatives were "taking Al Qaeda into Iran, training them and sending them back," *The Atlantic*'s Marc Ambinder termed the quote a "momentary confusion." Jake Tapper postulated "jet lag." But as the folks at thinkprogress.org noted at the time, during a short burst of media coverage over the controversy, McCain had made the same misstatement to nationally syndicated radio host Hugh Hewitt in a March 17 interview, saying, "As you know, there are Al Qaeda operatives that are taken back into Iran, given training as leaders, and they're moving back into Iraq." As media scholar Jay Rosen pointed out, McCain made this false claim four times, although Gen. David Petraeus had refuted it. (One *Weekly Standard* blogger insisted that McCain was correct, apparently overruling Petraeus, along with pretty much the rest of the world.)

The pattern of media misrepresentation of McCain's record extends into the area of his alleged expertise: foreign and military policy.

And this was hardly the only case in which McCain's understanding of what was happening on the ground in Iraq was at odds with reality as the rest of the world understood it. Appearing on *Fox News Sunday* on April 6, he insisted that the violence in Basra had ended when Shiite leader Muqtada al-Sadr declared a cease-fire. This was, he argued, demonstrable evidence that Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki's government was gaining ground. "I don't think Sadr would have declared the cease-fire if he thought he was winning. Most times in history, military engagements, the winning side doesn't declare the cease-fire. The second point is, overall, the Iraqi military performed pretty well.... The military is functioning very effectively," said McCain. The only problem with this assertion was that it contradicted just about every news report from the region; it was the Iranian government, together with members of Maliki's government, that pleaded with Sadr to cease military operations.

McCain also recently misstated the number of US troops in Iraq, saying on May 29 that "we have drawn down to pre-surge levels." The military, in fact, is two full brigades above the pre-surge levels. Recall that in 2003, then–Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean made a similar misstatement on *Meet the Press* about the number of active-duty US troops and was widely excoriated; a representative criticism came from MSNBC political analyst Mike Barnicle, who said Dean's interview "resembled the sound and the sight of a man crashing his candidacy into a bridge abutment." But McCain largely escaped such damnation.

Amazingly, while McCain claims to base his presidential campaign on his ability to secure "victory" for America in Iraq, reporters have so far paid precious little attention to the contradictions his statements and policies embody. Despite the desire of roughly 65 percent of Americans to withdraw from Iraq within the year, according to poll after poll, McCain believes it would be "reckless," "morally reprehensible" and an "unconscionable act of betrayal." His plan essentially amounts to much, much more of the same. He proposes yet another increase in the number of American troops on the ground, by extending combat tours and accelerating the deployment of troops. McCain also proposes yet another counterinsurgency strategy—instead of clearing areas and then retreating, he suggests keeping American forces in every cleared area. This plan, if successful, would demand more troops, and it is difficult to imagine just how he intends to recruit them in a period when all the military services are well below their goals for even routine recruitment and are being forced to take ever larger percentages of felons, non–high school grads, older and older soldiers, the mentally unstable and many in other categories who would not have been allowed to enlist in the past. (The United States currently has approximately 155,000 troops stationed in Iraq and another 35,000 or so in Afghanistan.)

Even in the unlikely event of the achievement of his goals for Iraq, McCain appears to have no intention of leaving that nation to develop on its own without permanent US military bases and a heavy footprint of US troops. (This is indeed the most charitable interpretation of McCain's comments that he would have no objection to US troops remaining in Iraq for "a hundred years.") Such a prolonged occupation would necessarily drain billions, if not trillions, from the US Treasury, but McCain offers no more guidance about the source of the funding for his expanded war plans than he does about its recruits. In February, he responded affirmatively when asked on ABC's *This Week* if he was a "'read my lips' candidate, no new taxes, no matter what." Pressed further by George Stephanopoulos, McCain insisted there were no circumstances under which he would raise taxes.

The Myth of the Bull Moose

With a lifetime score of 24 percent by the nonpartisan environmental group the League of Conservation Voters, McCain has an anti-environmental bent that stands in stark contrast to what Americans say they want from their next President. It's true that he has asserted the "facts of global warming demand our urgent attention," which is more than most in his party will admit. But his plans to address the crisis do not demonstrate much urgency.

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What's more, a cornerstone of McCain's environmental plan is the $3.7 billion of giveaways he would shower on the nuclear energy industry. The plan, while wildly expensive, is unlikely to reduce American carbon emissions significantly, since it envisions the building of just three new plants—plants that have proven nearly impossible to build anywhere in this country in recent decades. (As Christian Parenti recently reported in these pages, "a 2004 analysis in *Science* by Stephen Pacala and Robert Socolow, of Princeton University's Carbon Mitigation Initiative, estimates that achieving just one-seventh of the carbon reductions necessary to stabilize atmospheric CO_2 at 500 parts per billion would require 'building about 700 new 1,000-megawatt nuclear plants around the world.'") And while nuclear power is extremely risky and expensive, McCain rules out subsidies for far cheaper and more environmentally friendly forms of energy. Nuclear energy aside, he explains, "I'm not one who believes that we need to subsidize things. The wind industry is doing fine, the solar industry is doing fine," he told an interviewer.

Then there are the so-called "social" issues. It's not just that McCain's strong antichoice position is out of step with that of most Americans. No less worrisome are his close ties to some of the most radical leaders of the Christian fundamentalist movement. McCain has repeatedly attempted to distance himself in a vague and imprecise fashion from the more extreme statements of the Catholic-hating, Hitler-admiring Pastor John Hagee, whose support he had previously worked so hard to earn. He was also forced to distance himself, quite belatedly, from the support he had so energetically pursued from the Rev. Rod Parsley, who has called hate crimes legislation a "deceptive ploy of [the] liberal, homosexual agenda." Parsley has also advocated criminal prosecution of adulterers, compared Planned Parenthood to the Nazis, and refers to Islam as an "anti-Christ religion" and to the Prophet Muhammad as "the mouthpiece of a conspiracy of spiritual evil." Before May, when McCain finally repudiated Parsley (together with Hagee), he told reporters that he felt "honored" to be associated with "one of the truly great leaders in America, a moral compass, a spiritual guide." The number of flip-flops—indeed, back flips—McCain has performed with regard to his party's intolerant Christian fundamentalist base resists easy calculation. Recall that in 2000, when faced with religious-right attacks on his campaign, McCain labeled Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson "agents of intolerance" and "corrupting influences on religion and politics." This time around, he happily went to kiss the late Reverend Falwell's ring with a speech at Falwell's Liberty University.

The number of flip-flops—indeed, back flips—McCain has performed for his party's Christian fundamentalist base resists easy calculation.

Let's take a moment to sum up: the anti-torture candidate supports torture. The pro-immigration candidate opposes immigration. The candidate who opposes tax cuts for the rich supports them. The pro–campaign finance reform candidate has a campaign that is run almost exclusively by lobbyists, and exploits loopholes in the law to skirt spending limits—even the laws the candidate wrote. The candidate who opposes "agents of intolerance" in the Republican Party embraces them. The candidate with the foreign policy experience frequently confuses Sunnis and Shiites and misreads Iranian influence in the region, but is proposing permanent war. The candidate who claims to be a fiscal conservative wants to bust the budget. The candidate who claims to take global warming seriously does not want to take any serious action to address it.

In light of this evidence—as well as much, much more that space does not permit discussion of here—it is difficult not to conclude that the figure with whom so many mainstream journalists are infatuated is largely an invention of their collective imagination, one they often admit they love not because of what he says and does but because they—as with George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin—can discern what lies in his heart. Recall that the liberal Nicholas Kristof professes to admire McCain because the candidate "truly has principles that he bends or breaks out of desperation and with distaste. That's preferable to politicians who are congenital invertebrates." This is a view echoed by *New York Times Magazine* political correspondent Matt Bai, who explains, "Like every politician I've known, McCain will sometimes surrender to the cheap ploy or prevarication when the moment demands it, but it is often with a smirk or a wince, some hard-to-miss signal that he knows he's up to no good."

Perhaps the most impressively convoluted defense of McCain comes from *Slate* editor Jacob Weisberg. In his April 2006 article "The Closet McCain," Weisberg attacks those of us on what he calls "the literal-minded left" for getting "McCain all wrong." His history, his voting record, his speeches, his promises constitute merely what Weisberg terms "a stratagem—the only one, in fact, that gives him a shot at surviving a Republican presidential primary." The real McCain, he promises, will come "roaring back" once he dispatches the distasteful process of "building bridges to Bush and the evangelicals." On what does Weisberg base his self-confidence? "If you watch closely, you still catch plenty of signals that the old new McCain isn't dead, just hiding out. He continues to take on the president and his own party where it matters to him, on the use of torture in the war on terrorism and on immigration, where he sponsored a bill with Ted Kennedy to allow millions of illegal immigrants to become citizens."

Of course, McCain has disowned those positions together with almost everything else with which Weisberg credits him. But not to worry, Weisberg promises. "The Bull Moose has temporarily turned into a performing elephant. But the Moose will be back—around March 2008."

Here it is, summertime already, and we are still waiting. But be patient, dear reader. After all, when was the last time bigfoot reporters and pundits steered you wrong by advising you to ignore significant policy differences between two candidates and the two parties they represent and to trust instead in the steady "determination" and heartfelt "moderation" of a Republican candidate for President? ■

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Warriors for Zion—in California

Exaggerated claims of campus anti-Semitism have drawn media and Congressional attention.

by JON WIENER

Columbia and Barnard aren't the only campuses where right-wing Zionists have fought bitter campaigns in the name of defending Israel and Jewish students. The unlikely site of the latest battle, as intense and angry as anything in Manhattan, is the University of California, Irvine (UCI). I should know—I teach there.

While the campaigns at Columbia and Barnard failed to persuade those schools to deny tenure or otherwise penalize faculty members the right-wing Zionists found objectionable, at UCI the professor who occupies the chair in Jewish history, Daniel Schroeter, has decided to leave after being condemned for failing to support the right-wing Jews' campaign. Thus that campaign has had its first big success—but instead of getting rid of a Palestinian professor, they've gotten rid of a Jewish one.

TIM ROBINSON

UCI has been described as a place where rocks are thrown at Jews, swastikas painted on campus buildings and Hamas slogans displayed at a commencement ceremony. These charges have been disseminated widely—not only in the Jewish press, including the *Jerusalem Post*, but also in such mainstream media outlets as Fox News, where Bill O'Reilly featured the Hamas commencement story. And they were listed in a formal complaint filed by the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) with the US Office of Civil Rights (OCR), arguing that Jewish students at UCI were the target of harassment and that the university had failed to protect them from anti-Semitic acts.

The OCR exonerated the UCI administration in a report issued in November. You might think that would have been the end of it, but the report only escalated the ZOA claims of Jewish victimization and its campaign against UCI. Three Republican senators—Arlen Specter, Sam Brownback and assistant minority leader Jon Kyl—and five members of Congress recently expressed "concern regarding anti-Semitic incidents aimed at Jewish students" at UCI and complained about the OCR report.

The OCR issued its report after federal investigators visited the campus eleven times to monitor demonstrations and interview students and staff. Stone-throwing at Jews? The ZOA complaint listed one stone thrown at one Jew in 2004. Swastikas on campus? The ZOA complaint listed one swastika found in a men's room toilet stall—with Bitch Ass Asians written underneath. "The campus police investigated the incident immediately," the OCR found, "but were unable to determine the culprit or the motive." The swastika was promptly removed. And the "violently anti-Semitic" commencement where Muslim students displayed "Hamas slogans"? At the 2004 commencement some Muslim students wore green stoles over their gowns that contained Arabic script. The script, according to faculty members who read Arabic, spelled out the creed recited daily by all devout Muslims, "There is no god but God"—the equivalent of the Jewish "Shema Yisrael" ("The Lord is One").

After the OCR concluded that there was "insufficient evidence" that the UCI administration had failed to protect Jewish students from harassment, an off-campus, ad hoc Jewish group issued its own report in February. It urged Jewish students "with a strong Jewish identity" to leave UCI and newly admitted students not to enroll.

And then there's Daniel Schroeter, an internationally recognized scholar of Moroccan Jewish history who was appointed to UCI's Teller Family Chair in Jewish history fourteen years ago. Recently he's been denounced not for anything he said but for not taking a public position in favor of the ZOA campaign. Part of the problem, apparently, was that he worked on a program promoting campus dialogue between Muslims and Jews, and he brought to the campus Muzammil Siddiqi—a Muslim scholar who often speaks to Jewish groups. Siddiqi, who received an award in 1999 from the National Council of Christians and Jews, was invited by George W. Bush in September 2001 to participate in the National Day of Prayer and Remembrance at Washington National Cathedral. Nevertheless, Schroeter was condemned by some local Jewish activists for bringing to campus someone with "connections to terrorists." Clearly feeling the pressure, Schroeter decided to accept an offer from the University of Minnesota. Cheaper real estate and a bigger Jewish studies program were factors, but Minnesota is also a place where the Jewish studies faculty have not been targeted or harassed by right-wing Zionists.

It's true that the campus has an active Muslim Students Union, which sponsors Zionist Awareness Week, during which speakers denounce Israeli treatment of Palestinians and have shouted "Death to Israel!" It also sponsored an event titled "Holocaust in the Holy Land" and had a torn Israeli flag marked with what appeared to be blood. One speaker at Zionist Awareness Week in 2006, Amir Abdel Malik Ali, said, "The Zionist Jews own Fox News.... They got the CIA. They got the media. They got Congress."

The ZOA complaint argued that Zionist Awareness Week

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created a "hostile environment" for Jewish students. The university's position has been that the Muslim Students Union has a free speech right to make these statements as long as it does not target individuals. And of course the Jewish students have a right to hold their own rallies and put up their own signs.

The statement by the three senators criticizing the OCR for exonerating Irvine appears to have a broader legislative purpose. Their letter, addressed to Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, whose department oversees the OCR, argued that Jews are a protected group under the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This is a clear endorsement of the ZOA position that Jews have the same right under that law to federal protection from anti-Semitism that blacks have to protection from racism.

The ZOA, which claims a national membership of 50,000, is a militant defender of Israeli settlement of the West Bank and regularly targets liberal Jews and others who criticize that policy. The lead item on its website in April attacked the Harvard Hillel for sponsoring a Breaking the Silence tour, in which Israeli soldiers who have served in the territories speak out against Israeli policy, describe their actions in the territories and talk about "what being part of an occupying army does to the occupier" [see Eyal Press, "Israeli Army Vets Speak Out," *The Nation* online, March 1]. ZOA head Morton Klein said the exhibit sponsored by the Harvard Hillel "incites hatred of Israel, violates the Jewish law of not bearing false witness, and plays into the hands of Israel's enemies."

In the most recent round of this battle, the ZOA condemned the national Hillel summit in March for inviting UCI chancellor Michael Drake to speak on the university and anti-Semitism. That criticism was featured in a widely read story in the *Jerusalem Post*. At the conference Drake condemned anti-Semitism but defended the principle that the university should remain "content neutral" and refrain from regulating student speech. The ZOA has demanded that Drake not only condemn anti-Semitism in general but also denounce specific anti-Semitic statements made by campus speakers.

After Drake's appearance at the Hillel summit, leaders of four Jewish student organizations at UCI issued a statement saying they "strongly supported" the chancellor and declared that while "verbal anti-Semitism…unfortunately continues to exist on campus," Jewish student life was prospering, with more than100 students attending Hillel's weekly Shabbat dinners and seventy-one joining the Jewish fraternity Alpha Epsilon Pi.

For a while it looked like the campaign may have gone too far. The report that called on Jewish students to shun UCI attacked the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, the Orange County Jewish Federation and Hillel for "complicity" with UCI in failing to protect Jewish students. But the ZOA claimed a crucial victory in early June when it announced that the OCR would open a new investigation of anti-Semitism at UCI, focusing on Muslim Students Union activities in May 2007. A triumphant ZOA declared that if UCI is found to have failed to protect Jewish students' rights, the entire campus "can lose its federal funding." ■

Letters

(continued from page 2)

some actually criminalize treatment of such patients.

Jenifer Lingeman, MD
Emergency Medicine

Let Them Eat Ethanol

Missoula, Mont.

Thank you, John Nichols, for "The World Food Crisis" [May 12]; finally, a discussion of the crisis that does more than blame biofuels. Turning US corn—genetically engineered cattle feed—into ethanol is not taking food from people in Africa.

We need to solve the real issue, the convergence of massive commodity speculation with the destruction of agriculture in poor countries. WTO, NAFTA, CAFTA, G8, IMF—the acronyms of corporate power—(1) systematically destroyed agriculture in impoverished countries with "free market" policies, (2) created trade deals that ensured poverty wages and (3) fostered a "market" system whereby commodity speculators on the Chicago Board of Trade determine the price of corn in Zambia and rice in Haiti. With the end of the real estate bubble, investment bankers and hedge funds are bringing us the food bubble—record profits in a world where 3 billion people have no money. As Nichols suggests, money is essential. But solutions will come with food sovereignty, not charity.

The G8 governments need to take agriculture out of global trade agreements and stop the IMF, the World Bank and people like Robert Zoellick from dictating economic policy to poor countries. The $400 billion debt of impoverished countries held by international financial institutions needs to be canceled immediately for every poor country with a democratically elected government—and canceled without IMF "reforms." People who cannot afford to buy food should not be suffering from the debts racked up by the dictators who oppressed their grandparents.

Finally, the rich countries need to help poor countries redevelop agriculture with assistance informed by local farmers, independent of transnational corporations. Genetically modified seed from Monsanto is not food sovereignty.

Clifford Bradley

Franklin, N.C.

John Nichols perpetuates an oversimplification—that growing for export markets is "bad." I am a founder of Asociación ANAI, a Costa Rica–based nonprofit that has devoted much of the past thirty years to enabling small family farmers in the Talamanca region of Costa Rica and Panama to compete in export markets. More than 2,000 families are realizing decent incomes based primarily on the production of organic chocolate, banana and other products for export. The income has enabled them to stay on the land, improve their conservation practices and produce a significant proportion of what they eat. In 1980 their main alternatives involved logging and/or selling their farms and/or seeking employment in nearby agro-industry. For further information, check out www.anaicr.org.

William O. McLarney
Executive director, ANAI Inc.

Correction

The documents from the Directorate of National Intelligence, revealing the scope of intelligence outsourcing, mentioned in Jeremy Scahill's "Blackwater's Private Spies" [June 23] were first obtained by journalist Tim Shorrock, author of the new book *Spies for Hire*, and reported in *Salon*, followed by the report by blogger R.J. Hillhouse cited in the article.

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Books & the Arts.

JOHAN ORDONEZ/EL PERIÓDICO DE GUATEMALA

Manuel Baldizón brandishes *The Art of Political Murder* at a rally during Guatemala's presidential campaign this past fall.

The Novelist and the Murderers

by NATHANIEL POPPER

Early last November, the novelist Francisco Goldman was shouldering his way through the Texas leg of a reading tour for his first nonfiction book, *The Art of Political Murder*. Published by Grove Press in September, the book had received glowing reviews in newspapers and magazines nationwide, and it would soon be included by *The New York Times Book Review* in its list of the 100 Notable Books of the Year. On November 5 Goldman was relaxing in his hotel before a reading at a Houston Barnes & Noble when his BlackBerry pinged with an e-mail from an innkeeper in the Guatemalan town of Santiago de Atitlán. One day earlier, Guatemalans had voted in a general election, and the winner of the presidential contest was Álvaro Colom, a self-proclaimed Social Democrat and head of the National Unity of Hope (UNE) Party. Quite unexpectedly, Colom had come from behind in the polls to defeat Otto Pérez Molina, a salt-and-pepper-haired general who had campaigned on the slogan of *Mano Dura* (Firm Fist), a sturdy platform in a country that was ruled by the military and repressive right-wing parties almost without interruption from 1954 until the late '90s. As it happens, the election was also the subject of the e-mail Goldman received from the innkeeper, David Glanville: *The Art of Political Murder*, Glanville wrote, may have been a decisive factor in Pérez Molina's loss.

Goldman's book is about neither the election nor the candidates. *The Art of Political Murder* is an investigation of one of Guatemala's most notorious and gruesome killings. On a Sunday night in April 1998, Bishop Juan Gerardi had been bludgeoned to death just two days after publishing a report about the Guatemalan military's responsibility for civilian massacres in the country's recently concluded civil war. In the midst of investigating the case, Goldman found sources who told him that on the night of the murder, Pérez Molina was hanging out in a convenience store near Gerardi's church with a few conspirators in Gerardi's murder. That scrap of information is mentioned—but not heavily scrutinized—by Goldman in his book.

The Art of Political Murder was available only in English, but during the campaign the news it contained slowly spread through Guatemala: in some places disseminated by priests, in other places by UNE officials at election rallies. In Santiago de Atitlán, a small indigenous town on the shores of Guatemala's most beautiful lake, word had arrived in the form of a pamphlet featuring three photos—two of Gerardi and one of the cover of *The Art of Political Murder*—and a line from the book, translated into Spanish, about the general's alleged role in the crime. The pamphlets were handed out to people visiting Santiago's cemetery on the Day of the Dead, two days before the election. Dolores Ratzan, a local woman who had lived in exile in the United States during much of the civil war, says she saw the pamphlets when she went to the cemetery. What she noticed even more was the discussion they stirred up. "I just heard people talking about it—like, This Pérez Molina, he killed the bishop. That's what everybody talked about," she recalled a few months after the election. She says that on election day, "that's why a lot of people didn't vote for him, because he was a killer."

Pérez Molina's campaign of law and order had played well in Santiago, thanks to a wave of crime and lynchings last year. But as in many areas of Guatemala, the invocation of Goldman's account of Gerardi's murder had deep resonance. In 1981, at the height of the country's civil war, Guatemalan soldiers broke into Santiago's Catholic church and drove nails through the head of

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its priest—a transplant from Oklahoma who had been accused of siding too closely with the indigenous people.

Santiago has weathered the varied effects of US involvement in Guatemala. After the CIA-led coup d'état against Col. Jacobo Arbenz in 1954, the US government funded and trained Guatemalan military officers, some of whom went on to serve at a base near Santiago. More recently, Santiago has been the site of American charitable projects. But the unexpected presence of Goldman's book, not just in Santiago but throughout the country during the 2007 election campaign, represented an inadvertent kind of American involvement in Guatemala. Edgar Gutiérrez, an old colleague of Bishop Gerardi's and a former foreign minister, calls Guatemala a "kingdom of impunity." Written to tell one story about that kingdom, *The Art of Political Murder* has become caught up in another story, one about the kingdom's possible reformation. More improbable still, the book has injected an element of accountability and consequence into a country where for decades there's been far too little of either.

Goldman began reporting on the Gerardi case a few weeks after the bishop's murder.

During Guatemala's civil war, 200,000 people were killed—roughly 5 percent of the population at the outbreak of fighting—and nearly all of the dead were from rural indigenous areas. UN-monitored peace accords were signed by the Guatemalan Army and guerrillas in 1996, but since then a virtual narco-state has arisen, created and overseen largely by former military officers. The homicide rate in Guatemala is seven times that of New York City, and it recently surpassed the levels in Colombia and South Africa. The figure is roughly equal to what it was during the civil war—forty-five deaths per 100,000 people. Equally staggering is the fact that the Guatemalan police make arrests in about 5 percent of their homicide cases (in the United States, the figure is 62 percent). During the Colom-Pérez Molina presidential race, nearly sixty people affiliated with the campaigns were murdered, more than twice the number killed during the previous election, in 2003. During a recent stay in Guatemala City, I passed a man who was bleeding from a bullet wound in his abdomen at 1 PM in the middle of downtown. Several firemen, who are responsible for removing dead bodies, were on the scene, but the police were nowhere in sight.

Bishop Gerardi was renowned for defending a group often targeted by brutal political violence—Guatemala's downtrodden indigenous population. After working as the bishop in the rural province of El Quiché for six years, Gerardi was warned by locals that assassins were on his trail, and so in 1980 he fled to Costa Rica. But people who know him say that his exile never dulled his off-color humor or disdain for the risks involved with his work. After Gerardi returned to Guatemala in 1983, he helped found the human rights project of the Catholic Church, called Oficina de Derechos Humanos del Arzobispado (ODHA). After the 1996 peace accords, ODHA launched an investigation dedicated to providing a thorough accounting of civil war–related crimes, including the massacre of civilians. By 1998 the organization had assembled a four-volume report documenting the toll of the war. *Guatemala: Never Again* concluded that the military was responsible for 80 percent of the civilian deaths during the civil war. The next year, ODHA's findings were corroborated by a UN investigation, which attributed 93 percent of the casualties to the military.

Gerardi would not live to see this confirmation of his work. On April 26, 1998, two days after a public presentation of *Never Again* in Guatemala City's main cathedral, the bishop was found in a pool of blood in the garage of his parish house, a jagged piece of concrete nearby. The crime occurred a little after 10 PM, and the bishop's wallet and gold ring were found with his body.

Gerardi's church, San Sebastián, is a modest, elegant structure within blocks of the National Palace and every major intelligence agency, and initially it appeared that the investigation of the bishop's murder would, like so many other cases, disappear into the thicket of impunity. The crime scene was a mess (gawkers were allowed on the scene, and some walked through puddles of blood), and the first arrest was a homeless man. The UN verification team stationed in Guatemala after the peace accords quickly raised the possibility of a cover-up and criticized the government prosecutor for withholding documents.

The theory was certainly a plausible one, since at the time only one human rights case against members of the military had gone through the Guatemalan courts, and in that case, when an officer was convicted, he quickly escaped—this after the investigating police officer was murdered in broad daylight. Members of Gerardi's team at ODHA had worked on that case, and when their boss was killed, the young team of ODHA investigators, which included Edgar Gutiérrez, quickly went to work. While the government prosecutor investigating Gerardi's murder stumbled, the ODHA team found a taxi driver who had driven past the church on the night of the crime and seen a car with men gathered around it. They traced the car to a mothballed military base. When the information was shared with the government, all public records of the car disappeared. It was the first clear signal in the Gerardi case that, as Goldman writes in his book, "the Army had many chess pieces to play with, and a very large board."

Born in 1954 to a Guatemalan mother and a Ukrainian-American Jewish father, Goldman has a round head of curly black hair and a ready laugh. He lives in a brownstone in Brooklyn, and when I met him there books and papers were strewn about his one-bedroom apartment. Goldman spent most of his early childhood in Guatemala, and the country is the setting of his first novel, *The Long Night of White Chickens*, published in 1992. It's the story of a Guatemalan-American aristocrat from Boston who investigates the mysterious murder of his adoptive Guatemalan sister, who ran an orphanage in her home country. *The Art of Political Murder* covers similar territory—murder, paranoia, Guatemalan political intrigue—but it reads as though it were written by a different author. *The Long Night of White Chickens* is filled with florid poetic language that often doubles back on itself, exploring ideas of memory and dislocation. *The Art of Political Murder*, by contrast, is a study in spare storytelling, with Goldman rarely devoting more than a sentence to set a scene. Goldman is an ebullient, expressive man, but he says he felt the need to restrain himself while telling the Gerardi story in order to write "with the most diligent fidelity to the case itself."

Goldman began reporting on the Gerardi case a few months after the killing, initially on assignment for *The New Yorker*. He befriended the young team of ODHA investigators, joining them for long days of sleuthing and equally long nights of drinking. "When Frank wrote this book he was living with us—in all the time that we were suffering," Mario Domingo, the head of

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ODHA's legal team, recalls. As the ODHA team and a new, more ambitious government prosecutor pushed the case forward, Goldman quickly became a part of the story he was telling. When his piece appeared in *The New Yorker* on March 15, 1999, a small but respected Guatemalan newspaper, *El Periódico*, translated and printed the article in a special edition, and sent copies to 5,000 churches around the country. Several months later, Goldman showed up at the trial in Guatemala City, which had commenced after Gerardi's team at ODHA had assembled a case in concert with a new government prosecutor. In the halls of the courthouse, Goldman was menaced by taunts from the most colorful of the defendants, Capt. Byron Lima. During a break in the proceedings, Lima called Goldman a "faggot," leading to a brief verbal altercation. Soon thereafter, the defense lawyers called for the removal of Goldman from the courtroom—a motion that was rejected.

Other people involved in the case encountered more lethal forms of intimidation. Grenades were thrown into the backyard of a judge overseeing the case; masked men broke into the house of ODHA's director and assaulted his son and maid. Despite these threats—issued from Guatemala's kingdom of impunity—after a two-and-a-half-month trial the prosecutors and ODHA won convictions against two military officers, a sergeant and Father Mario Orantes, a priest who lived in the parish house with Gerardi and had colluded to let the killers into the church, according to the sentence. The judges determined that the crime had been planned and executed by the presidential intelligence unit, the Estado Mayor Presidencial (EMP), which had long been a nearly independent unit of terror within the Guatemalan government, answerable only to the president. The court issued a list of thirteen others, including seven military officers, to be investigated further, a probe that continues to this day.

The four convictions did little to close the case. The officers denied any role in the crime and quickly appealed. At the same time, two European journalists, Maite Rico and Bertrand de la Grange, published an article in August 2001 in the Mexican magazine *Letras Libres* that claimed to contradict the findings of the court. According to the duo, who relied heavily on information provided by members of the military and their attorneys, the military defendants had been innocent and the murder had been committed by renegade military officers in cahoots with the Catholic Church. In 2003, Rico and de la Grange published a longer version of their article as a book, *¿Quién mató al obispo?* (Who Killed the Bishop?).

The Rico and de la Grange argument won a wide following in Guatemala. Álvaro Arzú, who had been Guatemala's president when Gerardi was murdered and has since become the mayor of Guatemala City, handed out *¿Quién mató al obispo?* to foreign diplomats stationed in Guatemala. Among the many television networks and newspapers to run laudatory coverage of Rico and de la Grange was *El Periódico*, which published an excerpt from the book. "Bertrand and Maite are rightist journalists working here in a conservative, Catholic country," a top editor at the paper, Juan Luis Font, told me. "I think most editors here wanted to believe that they were telling the truth."

The vituperative atmosphere created by Rico and de la Grange provoked Goldman to expand his article into a book. It also pushed two crucial sources to open up to him: the lead government prosecutor, Leopoldo Zeissig, and Rafael Guillamón, a reticent UN police investigator who had been in charge of a parallel inquiry into the Gerardi case. Guillamón told Goldman that he was "nauseated" by the coverage and

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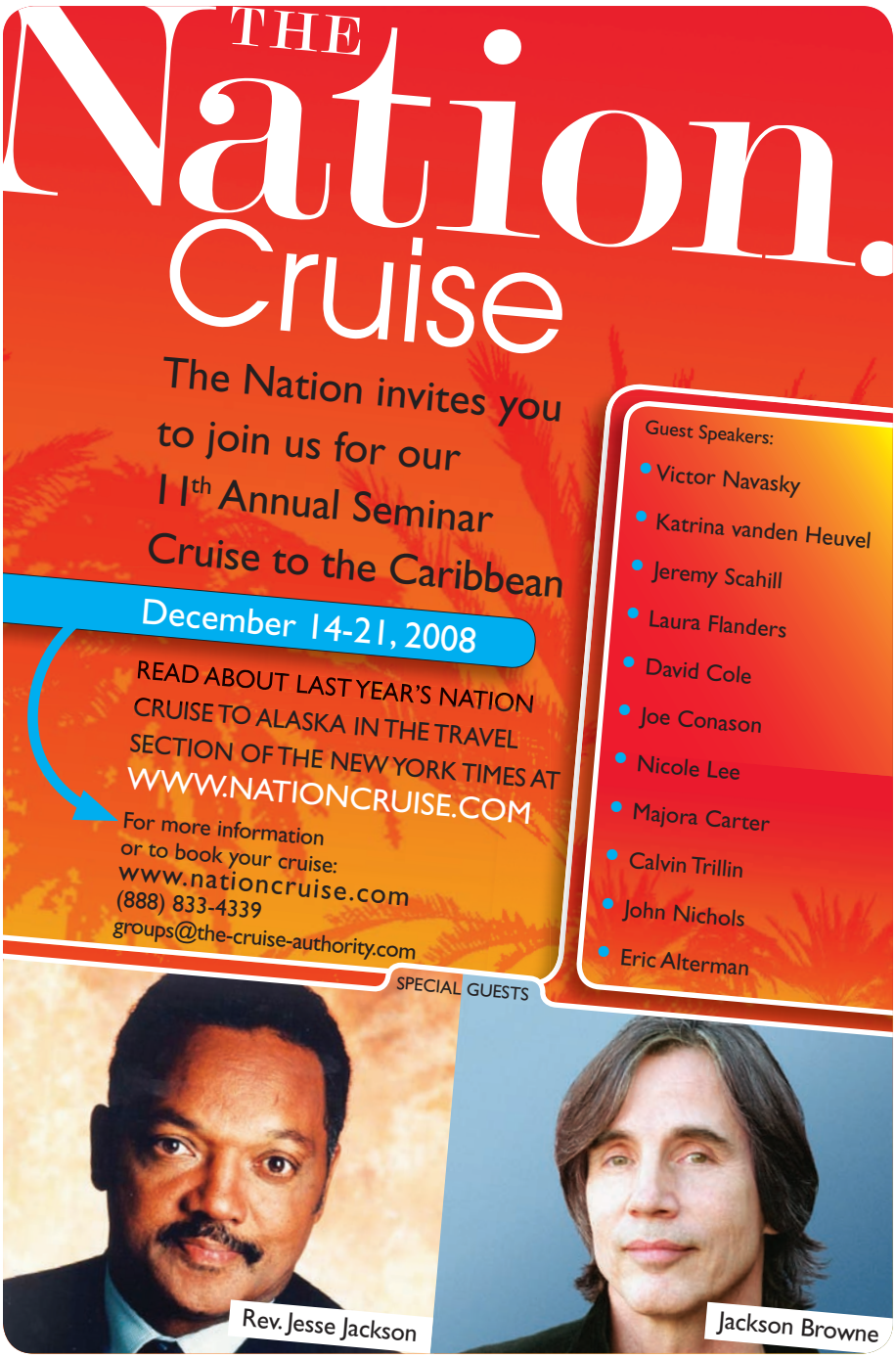
showed him all his old notebooks about the case.

Goldman was not alone in pursuing the story that had been laid out by the judges. *El Periódico* had Claudia Méndez, a young, tenacious reporter, on the beat. Méndez, who had studied at one of Guatemala City's bilingual schools, was only 23 when the trial started, and she speaks with a mix of humility and confidence about the case. "I was like a child when I started working on this case. It was a real clash—a real wake-up. Like I had thought of my country one way and then, bam, I had to realize it is actually this way." Méndez used her guile and seeming innocence to engage the defendants in jailhouse interviews that brought them as close as they ever came to admitting their culpability in Gerardi's murder. But in the end it was Goldman, not Méndez, who wrote the book about the case, and she expresses no unhappiness about that. "Who would have the means to do it here?" she explained to me during a driving tour of the Gerardi crime scene. Even more important than resources, Méndez says, is the fact that only a foreigner would have any credibility with the authorities: "They knew that Frank was a power that they cannot buy and they cannot threaten. It's someone from the outside."

In early 2007, as Goldman was putting the finishing touches on *The Art of Political Murder*, he gave Méndez a version. Soon people in the office of Álvaro Arzú spotted printouts of the galleys on the mayor's desk. Similar reports came from the bishop's office. (How those two offices nabbed copies of the galleys remains a mystery.) Goldman had sent the copy to Méndez so that the editors of *El Periódico* could translate and print an excerpt from the book before its publication. For the editors, it was not hard to see which pages would be the most explosive. About two-thirds of the way into the text, on page 239, Goldman introduces Pérez Molina, describing him only as a "Guatemalan officer." But this suave political operator would not blend into the seemingly endless cast of characters who people the book. An excerpt featuring the passage about the "Guatemalan officer" appeared in *El Periódico* on June 10 along with a photo of Pérez Molina.

Until *The Art of Political Murder* was published, Pérez Molina had never been publicly linked to the case. Goldman had pried his information from one of the central—though most disputed—witnesses in the case, an indigent man named Rubén Chanax, who slept each night in front of the bishop's garage door. After testifying at the trial, Chanax went into exile in Mexico City; Goldman tracked him down there in 2005 with tips from ODHA's investigators. The two sat down in Chanax's squalid apartment, and Chanax recounted for Goldman the events of the night of April 26, 1998.

Things began soon after 9 PM, when Chanax was in a convenience store just around the corner from San Sebastián, Gerardi's church. Known as Don Mike's, after its owner, the store looks like so many other Guatemalan mini-markets, with lollipops and cheap chips stuffed into glass cases. Chanax is a movie fanatic, and Don Mike had a television in the corner that customers could watch. That night, the movie *Congo*—based on the Michael Crichton novel—was playing on Channel 3. While Chanax was watching the film, he told Goldman, three men walked in. Chanax had mentioned the presence of the men during the trial, but at that time he said he only recognized one of them, Col. Lima Estrada, who was ultimately convicted. (Lima Estrada is the father of Byron Lima.) With Goldman, Chanax confidently said



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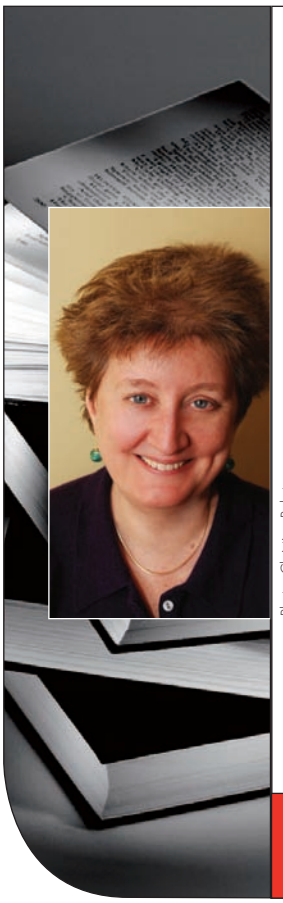
that one of the other men was Pérez Molina. Chanax also recalled hearing Don Mike say, "Here come my favorite clients."

Chanax told Goldman that since he had already seen *Congo*, he left before the end of the movie—with the military officers still in the corner store, drinking beer and laughing. Chanax went to claim his customary sleeping spot near the parish house, along with a number of other local indigents. Soon thereafter, a shirtless man peeked out of Gerardi's garage door, and, according to a variety of witnesses, military intelligence officers swiftly moved around the park outside the church as word of the bishop's death began to spread.

Chanax had earlier shared the information about Pérez Molina with UN investigator Rafael Guillamón when they spoke a few nights after the murder. Chanax also mentioned Pérez Molina to ODHA investigators when they visited him in Mexico. Mario Domingo, the lead lawyer at ODHA, said that he took Chanax's allegations seriously because another indigent had told him about well-dressed men congregating in Don Mike's on the night of the murder. But Domingo says the team at ODHA is, to this day, still investigating Chanax's identification of Pérez Molina, and he was not entirely happy with Goldman's decision to include the information in his book. "Yes, it's true, I have this info too—but I don't want the people to have this information," Domingo told me from Indiana, where he was taking a year off from his ODHA duties and studying at the University of Notre Dame. He fears, like many Guatemalans, that the longer a suspect knows he is under investigation, the easier it will be for him to cover his tracks.

The reference to Pérez Molina is hardly the most solidly grounded fact of Goldman's book. The source is a man who changed his testimony over the course of the trial, primarily to obscure what appears to be his own role in the crime; in court he acknowledged having gone into the garage after the murder to help foul up the crime scene. Goldman describes Chanax as a shifty, almost demonic character and suggests that he may well have been in on the crime. Once he had gone into exile, Chanax let it be known that he had been working as an informant for military intelligence, spying on Gerardi in what was known as Operation Bird. But Chanax's military affiliation was also what convinced Guillamón that Chanax knew Pérez Molina.

When *El Periódico* printed the excerpt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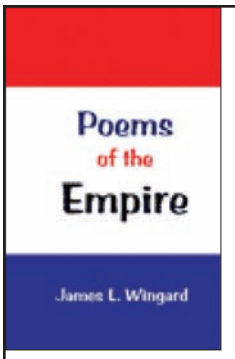

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Grace

The line we must walk
without any shadow

of a doubt, echoes
in the heart. The

history of each person's
bread. Everything is,

at first sight, good. What
would we be without

gravity and the silence
of a single needle on a

pine tree; each one, an
entire emblem for the whole.

All things are moral. We
cannot dodge what we seek.

Secrets hold the breath in.
We meet as water

meets itself; trembling
into perfect diffusion.

PAM REHM

about Pérez Molina on June 10, the reaction was predictably swift. Goldman had not asked Pérez Molina for a response to the allegations, and the retired general was infuriated. "Why didn't he interview me if he thought to include me as a character in his book?" he said in an interview in *El Periódico* the day after the excerpt appeared. Pérez Molina added that he was in Washington at the time of the murder, as Guatemala's representative to the Inter-American Defense Board. A *Periódico* reporter dutifully called Goldman the same day and asked why he had not spoken with Pérez Molina. "I didn't interview him because I don't believe that the people involved will tell you the truth," Goldman explained. "I found I didn't have much to gain by talking to military people." In this interview Goldman also divulged a piece of information that was not in the excerpt but ended up in the book. According to Guillamón, Pérez Molina had dinner with the top UN official in Guatemala, Guillamón's boss, a few nights after the murder. When the subject of Gerardi's murder came up, the UN official was allegedly struck by Pérez Molina's "stony reticence."

It was another three months before the publication of *The Art of Political Murder* in the United States, but the book became a hot topic among Guatemala's elite long before a hard copy hit the shelves. Guatemala City has essentially one political bookstore, Café Sophos, an oasis of gentility in the city's flashy business sector. The owners, a mother and son, say that there was not a day during the summer that someone did not come into the store to ask if they had the book.

Café Sophos placed an order for 100 copies, and when the book was released in the middle of September, it was the month's second-bestselling book. In October, the last month of the election campaign, it climbed to the top spot—the first time an English-language book had occupied that position. Marilyn Pennington, the Guatemalan-born co-owner of the store, said that she had read *¿Quién mató al obispo?* when it appeared in 2003. It had impressed her at the time—and given the difficulty of pinning down the truth in Guatemala, she was ready to accept Rico and de la Grange's theory of a cover-up. "People sort of accept not knowing in this country," Pennington said while organizing a stack of English-language magazines. "It's the price you pay for being alive."

When Goldman's book was published, Pennington read one of the first copies out of the box, and she had the same response as many of her customers. "The funny thing is that everyone thought that earlier one was a great book. And then this Goldman book appeared and people started really asking, saying, Hmm," she said. "This new one was really a human-filled book. The other one—it seemed like they had a thesis and they got the information to back it up."

The more momentous and prophetic response came soon after the June 10 *El Periódico* excerpt. Goldman was at home in Brooklyn when he got a phone call from Atlanta. A Guatemalan political handler was on the other end, and after a quick hello, Goldman was put on the line with Álvaro Colom, the presidential candidate for UNE. "Thank you for what you've done for justice," Colom said, according to Goldman and the handler who was on the call. "If I get elected president I would want to end impunity in Guatemala and create an environment where the Gerardi case could prosper." Goldman had not been following the campaign at the time, but he wished Colom luck and hung up.

Colom's chief opponent in the election had ascended through Guatemala's elite military schools to oversee the cruelest wings of the armed forces during the most gruesome period of the civil war. In the 1980s Pérez Molina had been a teacher at the school for the Kaibil—a special force of assassins—and in 1992 he became the head of military intelligence, or D-2. It was while he was overseeing the D-2 that Efraín Bámaca—a guerrilla leader married to a Harvard-trained American lawyer—disappeared. In a document from the National Security Archives in Washington, a Guatemalan source says that Pérez Molina had gone to pick up Bámaca. Another document records a source as saying that Pérez Molina then made the decision to execute Bámaca, a charge Pérez Molina has denied.

In 1993 Pérez Molina won many admirers in the American Embassy when he defied an attempt by the Guatemalan president at the time, Jorge Serrano Elías, to seize absolute power. In 1994 a Defense Department cable titled "Colonel Otto Molina Today" said the officer was the leader of a group of "progressives that grew up with blood stains on their hands, though we have no direct information to suggest that Colonel Perez himself has [*sic*] involved in activities of this nature." A year before this memo was written, Pérez Molina had been given control of the notorious EMP.

Pérez Molina requested that we meet at the Clarion Suites, a favorite gathering spot for politicians located in the ritziest, American part of Guatemala City. His tan

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SUV arrived, and a bodyguard jumped out while the vehicle idled. A few minutes later, Pérez Molina climbed out of the driver's seat, wearing a blue blazer and jeans and looking the part of a casually polished mogul. He walked into the hotel alone and gave me a soft, warm handshake. In campaign posters Pérez Molina maintains a stern, intent stare. In person he had a pliant, almost anxious grin.

"I think that the campaign helped them to disinform people, attacking me as a military man, as a killer. And they showed Gerardi's picture," he said, looking down in a rueful way as we made our way into the hotel lobby. "What effect did this have in the vote? Well, not the book directly, but the campaign that derived from the book hurt me."

In his interviews immediately after the *Periódico* excerpt of Goldman's book, Pérez Molina alleged that *The Art of Political Murder* had been "*pedido*," or requested, by other politicians—with the implication that it had been paid for. When I mentioned the word, he laughed gently and said, "Yes, we believe that everything indicates that we were at a difficult moment in the campaign, and everything points to the fact that someone planned the timing of the book's release." When I asked him who exactly had made the request, he smiled and deflected the question. "We do have some names, but I'd rather not mention them," he noted. When I asked him about his military career, his responses remained evasive and general. "We do not deny that there were abuses, but we cannot say that the officers participated in the same manner," he said.

Pérez Molina worked me into a relaxed state with his gentle patter and clasped hands. The only time he became the least bit ruffled was when we returned to the charges about his role in the Gerardi murder that arose in the campaign. "On my career, I feel comfortable and proud of what I have done," he said, his eyes tensing into a squint. "But what did bother me was an offensive campaign, where it was against the military. It was obviously directed toward me—but also against the whole military, treating them as murderers who committed atrocities. They didn't make a differentiation that there are always good and bad people everywhere."

Pérez Molina has not been the only person to lash out against Goldman's book. The most vocal of the imprisoned defendants, Capt. Byron Lima, created a website after his conviction, and in June, when the *Periódico* excerpt appeared, he posted a professionally made thirty-minute video refuting Goldman's charges. In an e-mail sent to me from prison, he slammed Goldman's work: "For me the Goldman book is a book of stories with very little credibility and it bases its theory on doubtful gossip and cheap reports without the fundamentals of many journalists."

Lima directed me to an account of the case written by one of the defense lawyers and to Rico and de la Grange's book, which questions the courts and exonerates the defendants. Indeed, it was the two European journalists who made the most widely disseminated and coherent criticism of Goldman. In the fall, the authors brought out a cheaper paperback edition of their book. They also wrote an opinion article in *El Periódico*, and Rico wrote a letter to Goldman's Spanish publisher, Anagrama, asking for her side to be heard but without specifying the format her riposte should take. Rico's most substantive criticism was of the witnesses that Goldman and the court relied on—most of all Rubén Chanax. "The accused were sentenced based on a witness for the prosecution who changed his story five times (and always under oath)," Rico said of Chanax in her letter to Anagrama. She neglects to mention that Chanax was only one of dozens of witnesses, and that UN investigators in Guatemala substantiated the court's and Goldman's telling of the story. Rico and de la Grange approached the Gerardi case like classic defense lawyers, poking at every weakness of a complex story that the prosecution has managed to put together and taking advantage of the fact that the burden of proof does not lie with them.

Still, Rico and de la Grange's arguments found a favorable audience with one of the most influential people in Guatemala, the American ambassador. The previous two ambassadors, Prudence Bushnell and John Hamilton, had been strenuous supporters of the Guatemalan courts, which have upheld the Gerardi sentences through five rounds of appeals. But the current occupant of the post, James Derham, who was appointed in July 2005, told me that his reading and discussions have left him with doubts about the courts' decisions. "If you agree with what happened—the prosecution and the conviction—then that indicates it was a political murder," Derham said, slouching back in the big leather chair in his office. "But, you know, I'm not personally 100 percent satisfied that that's what happened."

When I visited Derham, there were two

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copies of Goldman's book on his coffee table, one in plastic wrap and the other a well-thumbed review copy that Goldman had sent him. A boyish-looking white-haired man, Derham was quick with his take on the book: "To give you my own kind of review of the book, I found the book kind of very difficult to follow—it's a murky book about a murky case." When asked if there was a clearer explanation for the murder, he replied, "I did kind of like the Rico book."

Derham takes issue with Goldman's portrayals of Pérez Molina. "I think either Goldman or someone else was kind of out to get Pérez Molina on this," he says. When Goldman learned of these remarks, I saw flashes of the quick temper that I had heard about. "Does this ambassador really think I spent eight years on the book because I was worried about one crummy presidential candidate?" Goldman fumed. "He sounds like the characteristic expat, a blustery blowhard." To some degree, though, the ambassador saw the same thing in the Gerardi case that Goldman did: an opacity in Guatemalan society that allows a case like this to continue to be scrutinized for years. "Everyone understands that there are bad things going on, but it's not clear who is not involved," Derham says.

SCOTT SADY/ASSOCIATED PRESS

The body of Bishop Juan Gerardi the night of his murder

At first glance, it is unclear why Pérez Molina would have been concerned about the sudden appearance of Goldman's book on the Guatemalan political scene. Guatemala is a country with a 70 percent literacy rate. "This is a country made up of illiterate people," says Edgar Gutiérrez, "and the people who know how to read, don't."

After the first round of the election on September 9, Pérez Molina appeared to be unscathed by the allegations, or anything else. He had netted enough votes to force a runoff with Colom, and going into October, his poll numbers had been steadily rising, with most polls showing him moving ahead of Colom in their two-way race. It was on the last day of September that Manuel Baldizón, a baby-faced legislator who is considered one of UNE's future stars, held up Goldman's book at a campaign event in the rural town of Esquipulas. "In this book there is proof that the military was involved in the death of Bishop Gerardi," Baldizón remembers saying. "Do we want to vote for the past or for the future?"

Baldizón said that in discussions among the UNE leadership in early October, there was recognition that the people "don't read books, so the way to get that information, and get the book to the population, was through the political campaign." Throughout October, Baldizón continued to brandish *The Art of Political Murder* at many campaign stops. "This book from Goldman is a great book—and it talks about things that we in Guatemala have not been able to discuss freely," he said.

The practice soon began to spread across the country. In Puerta Parada, a town on the road from Guatemala City to El Salvador, a priest held up the book at a Sunday Mass. He did not mention Pérez Molina by name, but according to people who were present he said, "This is a book you must read." "It warns us of not making errors," the priest also said. "We must not give our vote again to the past." Puerta Parada is home to many powerful Guatemalans. The president of the Congress was at the Mass, and he stood up during the sermon and left. Gutiérrez was also there, and he told me that "the people would have never expected the priest to be so explicit in his sermon. Many had no idea the book existed."

The widest dissemination of the book's claims came through the pamphlet. In the capital city, people from various neighborhoods recall waking up during the last weeks of the campaign to find the streets blanketed with the pamphlet, headlined Otto Pérez Organized the Assassination of Bishop Juan Gerardi. The target of the pamphlet learned of its existence in early October, when two of his deputies were assassinated on a street in downtown Guatemala City shortly before 7 AM. I had heard that Pérez Molina became openly emotional when he arrived at the scene, and he told me that all the pamphlets fluttering around the streets had left him feeling distraught. "First, we were deeply lamenting the murder of these two people," he recalls. "But then we lamented that these fliers were there, all over the area—all over the downtown where the assassination occurred."

The pamphlet was certainly not the only political material distributed during the campaign. But it had a certain iconic power. Colom's party had been trying to paint Pérez Molina as a man with a dirty military past, but, as with most matters of fact in Guatemala, it had been difficult to nail down any specific incidents. "I think what the Goldman book did was give substance to the whole idea of the attack that Pérez Molina was involved in the war," says Manfredo Marroquín, the head of the Guatemalan branch of Transparency International, "and that Guatemala did not need a president like that."

For Pérez Molina, perhaps the most damaging development came when Claudia Méndez of *El Periódico* returned to the Gerardi case during the last weeks of the campaign. In an October 21 article she examined Pérez Molina's claim that he had documents proving that he was in Washington at the time of Gerardi's murder. Méndez had turned up documents showing that Pérez

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Molina had six different passports that he used at various times. "Was it possible that he could come and go without leaving an official record?" Méndez asked in her article. (When I spoke to Pérez Molina in Guatemala City, he repeated that he had been in Washington at the time of the murder.)

After Méndez's article appeared, Pérez Molina did not show up to the final two debates of the campaign. The reason, he said, was that his lead appeared to be safe. On election day, whatever lead he may have enjoyed evaporated, and he lost by six points, 53 percent to 47 percent. There were, of course, many elements in the election aside from the charges about Pérez Molina's past. Colom promised social benefits to a country with widespread poverty, and allegations of corruption rocked both sides. Marroquín says that Pérez Molina's loss was largely due to the low turnout in Guatemala City, where right-wing candidates generally do well. This stemmed, he believes, from a discomfort with Pérez Molina's military past. In rural areas, the turnout was high, and Colom swept all but three of Guatemala's twenty-two departments.

Colom is the most progressive politician to be elected president of Guatemala in decades, yet the use of Goldman's book during the campaign was unpopular with many progressives who were close to the bishop. Mario Domingo, the lead lawyer at ODHA, says the organization is accustomed to seeing Gerardi's murder used as a political volleyball without the exposure ever leading to any concrete help for moving the investigation forward. Domingo and others at ODHA say that they have never been given a single page of information about any particulars of the case (such as the alleged role of the EMP) by any president. While Domingo is not displeased with the election results—"Obviously I prefer this government—it's not the best, but it is better than Otto Pérez"—he's waiting for Colom to demonstrate "a real commitment to solve this crime and not leave it in our hands."

The appointments Colom has made since the election have not entirely assuaged Domingo's fears. Colom's cabinet includes only a handful of Social Democrats, and his minister of defense was in the EMP at the time of Gerardi's murder. In April, Colom spoke at a ceremony commemorating the tenth anniversary of Gerardi's death, and while there had been talk that he would accept the state's responsibility for the murder, in the end he did not. More generally, Colom has taken only timid steps toward challenging the impunity enjoyed by drug traffickers. At the same time, a month after Colom took office, Jorge García, the special government prosecutor assigned to the Gerardi case and whose investigative team was dismantled by the previous presidential administration, received word from the attorney general that his team would be reinstated. "If Pérez Molina had won we would be out of a job," García told me from behind a desk in his new office.

On that desk I noticed a folder containing a worn, highlighted document listing the thirteen people who the judges in the Gerardi case said warranted further investigation as potential "intellectual authors" of the crime. García, a high-strung, bearded man, said that Goldman's book had "opened up new possibilities" for his investigating team. One point that García intends to pursue is the allegation of Pérez Molina's involvement, noting that "when the time is right we will speak with him. You have to understand that he has a lot of power. His circle of power is very strong. But sooner or later I have to speak with him."

A crucial task will be investigating the

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questions about Pérez Molina's whereabouts around the time of the murder. When initially interviewed after the allegations came out, Pérez Molina said he took three trips to Guatemala from his posting in the United States during the year of the murder. The documents that Méndez turned up indicate that he made at least four trips to Guatemala that year, including one less than a month before the murder. But these are the trips on only one of the six passports that appear in Pérez Molina's files. When I asked Pérez Molina for documents proving that he was in the United States when Gerardi was killed, he provided copies of the records previously reported on by Méndez.

As to the broader pursuit of justice in Guatemala, a judicial body known as the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala, or CICIG in the Spanish acronym, was created in the last months of the previous presidential administration. CICIG will oversee a team from the United Nations working with local prosecutors and judges on a handful of representative cases about clandestine sources of power in Guatemala. I was told that the head of CICIG has discussed making one of those cases the Gerardi murder.

CICIG is interesting because it is drastically different from the efforts at post-conflict recovery and reconciliation in countries like Rwanda and South Africa. CICIG is designed to name and punish specific perpetrators—a goal similar to the one Gerardi envisioned twenty-five years ago when he founded ODHA. Nery Rodenas, ODHA's somber executive director, says that Gerardi always saw his pursuit of criminals as part of the Catholic mission of forgiveness. "If the victims want to forgive, they need to know who to forgive, and why," Rodenas said. "Forgiveness cannot happen in an abstract manner."

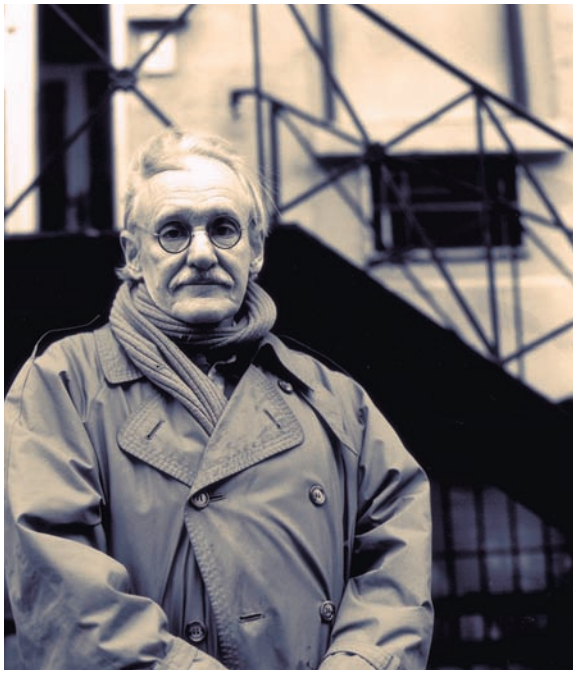
Goldman has kept his distance from the Gerardi affair since *El Periódico* published excerpts from his book. Last summer his wife drowned in a surfing accident in Mexico, and he could barely gather the strength to do a reading tour for *The Art of Political Murder*. During October, just after the tour had begun, aides to Colom had been working feverishly to bring Goldman into Colom's campaign. Frank Greer, an American communications expert who had become Colom's media adviser, eventually arranged a meeting with Goldman while he was in Seattle for a reading on October 25. The two met in a hotel lobby, and Greer told Goldman, "I think there is a real likelihood that unless we tell the story of his real background, Pérez Molina will be elected president. And I don't think you want that to happen." Greer asked Goldman to travel to Guatemala for a press conference, and while Goldman initially showed some interest, after speaking with friends in Guatemala he declined for fear of politicizing his work.

For the Guatemalan public, there are many names still secreted away in *The Art of Political Murder*. *El Periódico* did not translate the section on Álvaro Arzú, one of the country's right-wing power brokers. *The Art of Political Murder* discusses evidence that Arzú's son and Father Mario, who is serving a twenty-year sentence for his role in the Gerardi killing, were members of an underground gay community. Juan Luis Font, the editor at *El Periódico*, says that when the Spanish translation of Goldman's book is published in September, "it's those Arzú bits that are going to hit like a bomb in this conservative country." Goldman's book, which has already lived so many lives in its short existence, may have even more life in it yet. ■

Seeing Past the Gorgons

by BARRY SCHWABSKY

Peter Schjeldahl is the only currently practicing art critic whose style I envy. He can do things with words on which other critics can only look with wonder—though he sometimes does them too often or too flashily, so that reading seventy-five of his pieces at a go can be too much of a good thing. Still, the very title of his collection of reviews from over the last decade shows his finesse: what lightness of touch! Just two little monosyllables—contracted from three, admittedly—yet how much they tell us about the writing they somehow summarize. They take the form of an invitation, one without condescension or formality, for they assume an "us" that includes writer and reader as equals. And the invitation, mind you, is to see, not just to look, which is to say that they assume we can not only search but find. But as to what there is to be found, there is no foregone conclusion: "I don't know—let's see." Schjeldahl never writes as an authority, just as a particularly energetic, quick-thinking and vocal member of a club of art lovers of which the reader is also assumed to be a member.



ALEX REMNICK

Peter Schjeldahl, 2007

Let's See
Writings on Art From The New Yorker.
By Peter Schjeldahl.
Thames & Hudson. 256 pp. $29.95.

Schjeldahl's band of aesthetes is hardly an embattled remnant, but neither, surprisingly, is the art world, with its institutions entirely dedicated to fulfilling its needs. "Art lovers are a disorganized minority constituency in the conduct of the art culture," Schjeldahl once told an interviewer. "We are like selfish children; all we're interested in is art. And we learn to… we have our improvised guerrilla tactics. Getting in, getting past all the gorgons, and educators, and labels, and getting what we want and then going home." Schjeldahl's generation of art critics, now in their mid-60s, mostly created bases for themselves as art historians working in universities—among

Barry Schwabsky, an American art critic and poet living in London, is co-editor of the international review section of Artforum. *His most recent book is* Vitamin P: New Perspectives in Painting. *His new collection of poems will be published this year by Black Square Editions.*

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them Rosalind Krauss and Michael Fried. But Schjeldahl was "one of those sixties college dropouts you hear about," he admitted, and, without having a chip on his shoulder about it, he makes his autodidacticism a point of pride and of solidarity with readers who are assumed to be smart if not erudite.

An aspiring poet when he arrived in New York City in the mid-'60s, Schjeldahl got his start as a critic in publications like *Art in America* and *ARTnews* but eventually found his real niche writing for a broader public when he became the critic for the short-lived weekly *Seven Days* and then for the *Village Voice*. His move in 1998 to *The New Yorker*, however, may have been an even bigger leap. The *Voice* shares with the specialized art press a premium on contemporaneity, whereas *The New Yorker* has licensed Schjeldahl to turn his eye toward the cultural summits; yes, you can read about painters of the moment like John Currin, Neo Rauch and Lisa Yuskavage in *Let's See*, but more of it is devoted to classics like Vermeer, El Greco and Rubens—the blockbusters for whom crowds have lined up at the Met.

Meanwhile, what ever happened to Schjeldahl the poet? Poetry "gave up on me in the early 1980s," he explains. "I never had a real subject, only a desperate wish to be somehow glorious." Feelings one suspects are much rawer find a socially acceptable form in the guise of humility; "subject" may be another way to say "the will to persist in the face of indifference." But poetry lurks within Schjeldahl's prose, and when poetry is lacking there's still something nearly as good: the bracingly dialectical rhetoric of epigram. Speaking of a sculpture by Alexander Calder, Schjeldahl notes that it's "grand but so affable you forget to be awed." One of his great talents as a critic is that he also consistently forgets to be awed by artists even grander and much less affable than Calder—the "congenitally aggrieved" Cézanne; the "glowering" Jackson Pollock, "whose ruling emotion was fear"; the "truly barbarous" Ingres. Even when Schjeldahl advises that "it is good to be on amicable terms with Chardin," one suspects a hidden threat. "I've discovered a rewarding way of looking at sculptures by Alberto Giacometti," he announces at the beginning of one piece, inconspicuously acknowledging that he might not have found them very rewarding before. What makes Schjeldahl a good writer on the classics is that, without pretending not to recognize them as such, he likes to bring out the awkwardness, irritability and riskiness in their work.

Contemplating the art of the Aztecs, Schjeldahl thinks, shows that "a civilization based on slaughter steadied and inspired human genius." It's a sobering thought, but the very concreteness with which he imagines Aztec brutality ("Sights and smells of gore attended normal life in Tenochtitlan—children must have grown up liking them") testifies to the depth of his need to check his own aestheticism. The lesson is clear: art is good—Schjeldahl has no doubt of that—but not necessarily good for you. A persistent warning note is sounded: "beauty isn't nice." That's not too hard to disagree with, but how about "beauty can be a kind of murder"—this, apropos not of the Aztecs but of, again, Chardin? For Thomas Eakins, less dramatically, "the dignity of art may have stood in an inverse relation to the nobility of its motive." An Inquisitor painted by El Greco seems "repellently cruel," but the painter "regards severity as part of the man's important job and a good thing for everybody." In short, art is always capable of going against the grain of socially sanctioned good or of supporting socially sanctioned cruelty.

One reason Schjeldahl needs to reiterate this insight is to defend art from its credentialed defenders, all those "gorgons" and "educators" whose jobs in art's "sentimentally celebratory institutions" depend on showing that it is personally edifying and socially constructive—philistines *sans le savoir* in their attempt to harness art to utilitarian agendas of improvement. Whether in the museum hall or the seminar room, they must seem in his eyes a bit like Mrs. Beale in *What Maisie Knew*, who exclaimed of some lecture, "It *must* do us good—it's all so hideous." But there's more to it than that. He's fascinated by the danger in art for its own sake. He's a little like a connoisseur of fugu, the Japanese blowfish whose liver contains a deadly poison; if a nonlethal amount of the toxin remains in the fish after preparation, it is said to impart an especially desirable tingling sensation. It's a good *frisson* to feel in the vicinity of old master painting, which can so often be made to seem boringly worthy.

In retrospect, it's a bit surprising that Schjeldahl held out as a denizen of the contemporary art scene for the three decades before he was taken up by *The New Yorker*—or at least that he retained his enthusiasm instead of setting up shop as an accredited curmudgeon. His taste has never exactly been mainstream. Minimalism he acknowledges as "the dominant idea in art of the past forty years." He respects it and regrets it, and if he hasn't warmed to it by now he's never

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going to—not to its works, which "succeed by occasioning, rather than communicating, bleak epiphanies," and not to the milieu that formed in its wake, "waves of academically trained artists, curators, and critics" who could see the point of an art that would be "boring, on purpose." If Schjeldahl did have a moment when he appeared to be in sync with the zeitgeist, it would have been the era of what was wrongly called Neo-Expressionism. Looking back on "the early 1980s revival of painting and public sensation," he acknowledges, "I saw great promise in the moment and a role for myself in promulgating it. Its disintegration taught me a lesson in humility." Rarely has "humility" been such a transparent euphemism for "disappointment." What's sad is Schjeldahl's diffidence about continuing to make a case for the artists he championed in the early '80s. It would be interesting to know what he thinks now of David Salle, for instance, but mum's the word. Jean-Michel Basquiat is here, but he's an easy case if it's true that, as Schjeldahl says, he made really good work only in the single year of 1982—in that case you can uphold him and dismiss him by turns. Cindy Sherman is a special case among the stars of the early '80s: she's a photographer rather than a painter but also one of the few cases in which the taste of those "academically trained artists, curators, and critics" who now define the consensus links up with Schjeldahl's enthusiasm.

Schjeldahl's diffidence about continuing to back artists he championed in the '80s is sad.

Without the oxygen of what he calls "public sensation," Schjeldahl would choke. "Your criticism is about the studio," he once told me, "mine is about the opening." By "opening," he meant, I think, not so much the party, the social occasion, but rather the moment when a work first emerges in public view, as yet uncategorized and uninterpreted. At the time, I understood him to be subtly and perhaps rightly taking me to task for misunderstanding my role as a critic—to be saying that if there's a side to be taken, it's that of the public, not that of the artist. Schjeldahl and I are both admirers of Charles Baudelaire, who wrote of his art criticism that "as for techniques and processes…neither public nor artists will find anything about them here. Those things are learned in the studio and the public is interested only in the results." But at the same time, I now see, Schjeldahl was revealing his own limitation as a critic, a need not to be at one with the crowd but nonetheless to be where the crowd is. This weakness—if that's what it is—is inseparable from one of his great strengths as a critic, a sensitivity to the importance of what might be called the group mind in art.

Consider this passage: "In the early twentieth century, influential artists and intellectuals in Europe and America agreed to exalt Cézanne's obstreperousness as the echt modern mind-set, thereby instituting a cultural oligarchy of experts which even now, though with mounting self-doubt, stands against popular taste." Most curious, and indicative of Schjeldahl's fineness of touch, is his choice of the verb "agreed." He's gently poking fun at what Harold Rosenberg called "the herd of independent minds" by pointing to a contingency verging on arbitrariness in the self-appointed experts' election of Cézanne as their totem. But if you think Schjeldahl is aiming to debunk the cultural consensus—to suggest that somehow it would be better if we could all just forget the whole thing and go back to some form of untroubled pre-Modernist representation—forget it. He respects the social nature of opinion formation as much as he understands its fragility. He reminds us that there is no objective basis to the judgments that have become tokens of cultural belonging, like that of Cézanne's greatness, but that it can become nearly impossible to judge otherwise. And so it's just the case that "you can't say something bad about Cézanne in the discourses called 'modernist' any more than you can gainsay Jesus with language from Christian liturgy."

But that doesn't mean that praising Cézanne is enough to make you a Modernist any more than praising Jesus is enough to get you into heaven. Maybe in religion there's wiggle room, but in art, salvation definitely lies in works, not faith, as shown by the fascinating case of Norman Rockwell, to whom Schjeldahl devotes some pages of beautifully calibrated assessment. Remember that when Schjeldahl started out, it would have been impossible for an art critic—as opposed to, say, a highbrow critic of mass culture like Leslie Fiedler—to attend seriously to a figure like Rockwell. It would have been—to give Schjeldahl's analogy with religion another turn—like allowing fair response from Beelzebub in *The Book of Common Prayer*. Yet as Schjeldahl points out, Rockwell rated Picasso "the greatest," and his famous image—you see, I hesitate to call it a painting!—of an old fellow trying hard to make heads or tails of a Pollock painting "expresses Rockwell's perplexed admiration for an avant-garde that he seemed never to resent for scorning him." Schjeldahl doesn't scorn Rockwell. He'd like to like him and finds much to admire, both in his painterly chops and in the lessons his art was devoted to broadcasting. "Most of them," Schjeldahl says of Rockwell's works, "play variations on the theme of tolerance." The problem is that, in the eyes of a critic who spent his boyhood, as Schjeldahl did, in the kinds of small heartland towns that are the inevitable settings for these pictures, Rockwell "got everything right—except the confusion that flowed in and through my experience"—except, that is, its soul. He left out the poison that gives art and selfhood (not unlike fugu) their savor.

Still, Schjeldahl thinks, even to concede as much to Rockwell as he does constitutes a swerve away from Modernist orthodoxy—"no mere adjustment of a reputation but a shift in how we identify and value visual art." As a reviewer on the beat it's not incumbent on him to theorize that shift, but the very lucidity of his examination of Rockwell's art—along with his finally reassuring realization that he can't commit himself to the artist's cause—makes it easy to overlook the depth of the transformation that the attempted rehabilitation of Rockwell would represent if taken seriously. It's not a change Schjeldahl wants to resist. He thinks he'd like art to be rescued from the "cultural oligarchy of experts" to whom Cézanne delivered it and that eventually solidified into the academy of the minimalists. He dreams of the artist "as story-teller, as bard"—an artist who would be illustrative and popular but just as great, as dangerously soulful, as the Modernists.

The problem is that the artists who fill that bill already exist. They have names like Robert Altman, Clint Eastwood and Spike Lee. If Schjeldahl really wanted to dwell on that kind of art he could have become a film critic. Luckily, that never happened. When he tries to convince himself that "important painting of the past forty years, from Gerhard Richter to John Currin, has become ever more illustrative," well, that never happened either. Such artists quote illustration without deigning to engage in it. And Rockwell hasn't really been accepted; we've just gotten used to him. The end of Modernism shows no sign of ushering in a more popular form of fine art. Of course, you never know what's just around the corner, so why not stick around and see? ■

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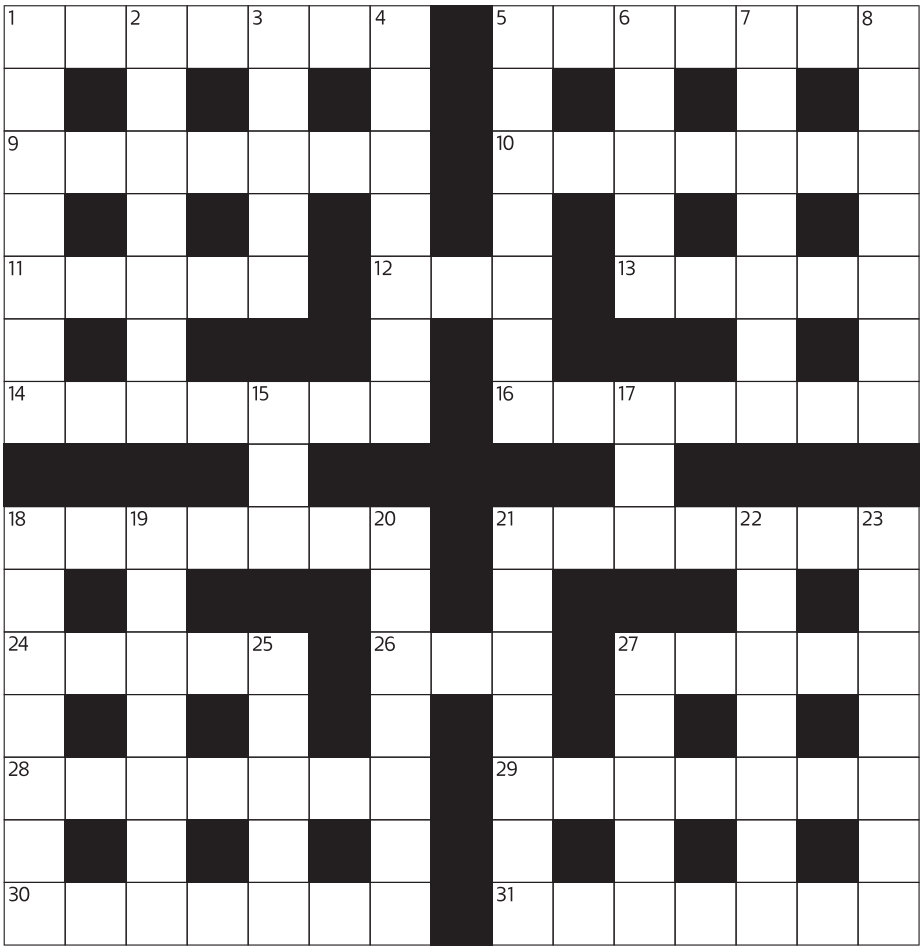

ACROSS

1 and **5** When you're in it, you wish you were out of it, and it's not a funny mix-up! (7,7)

9 Possibly one name for a flower in the buttercup family. (7)

10 What some frown on as apparel in return—as the runaway did—when feathers get so mixed up. (7)

11 Throws something in the pot, possibly. (5)

12,13 and **26** Produce by multiplication, according to the figures of those against birth control. (11)

14 The way the Brits throw things on the loch, typified by violets. (7)

16 Is evil less likely to show it in Spain? (7)

18 What such meat comes from sounds dear, with outrageous noise following 5, to a point. (7)

21 Baffles most of the unsightly things. (7)

24 See 21 down

26 See 12

27 One who is seen coming out with it as an IOU recording. (5)

28 Confined to a particular place, at last the little rodents appear back to front. (7)

29 One might be found in a nomadic tribe, but race in endless sand. (7)

30 Acts rebellious, with a short time as they say, to scatter the seed. (7)

31 No longer with us, with the text needing amending about what follows the company name, perhaps. (7)

DOWN

1 There's a reminder of injury on those muscles some want to be flat, like the images of the Egyptians. (7)

2 You have to come out before you can make one. (7)

3 They blow in the woods, like other reeds. (5)

4 The sort of phrases that often guide people. (7)

5 A sailor that a famous Lily went after, with scales of silver. (7)

6 "Guts!"—that sounds awful! (5)

7 A bunch of hay, not quite full of this, and somewhat threatening. (7)

8 What one often does to check the last part, with all but Dobbin's head. (7)

17 and**15** Five letters, and sometimes W and Y, with what the groom does when taking overhead transportation. (6)

18 Blue in a lover's verse, though of a slightly different color, with one of the strings set improperly. (7)

19 Describing those who are frequent travelers? (7)

20 Subtle distinctions when the sun comes up around the swaying cane. (7)

21 and **24** across Aren't women allowed to hold property here? (3,4,2,3)

22 Polish the symbol of what implied a decisive crossing. (7)

23 Material didn't stand around part of the fork. (7)

25 So-called way you can get to amend the answer. (5)

27 Dialectically dared dust around Robespierre's head. (5)

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 3129

B	A	N	D	A	N	A	S	■	T	H	E	F	A	T
Y	■	E	■	T	■	L	■	S	■	E	■	R	■	H
C	A	P	I	T	A	L	■	P	L	A	T	Y	P	I
H	■	A	■	E	■	E	■	E	■	R	■	I	■	R
A	L	L	I	N	■	G	R	E	E	T	I	N	G	S
N	■	■	■	T	■	E	■	C	■	■	■	G	■	T
C	H	I	L	I	■	S	C	H	N	A	P	P	S	■
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E	■	V	■	P	■	O	■	G	■	E	■	A	■	O
W	E	E	P	E	R	S	■	I	N	D	I	C	A	N
E	■	N	■	N	■	E	■	L	■	L	■	R	■	A
D	R	E	S	S	Y	■	V	E	R	Y	W	E	L	L

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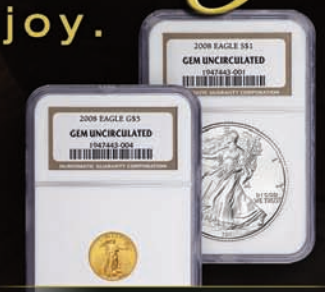

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